

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

**The Papers of the
Distinguished Scholar Series**

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edited by
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INTRODUCTION

The Distinguished Scholars Series of the Southeast Asian Studies Program, University of Hawaii, was initiated in 1982 as one of many projects sponsored through our National Resource Center for Southeast Asia, established in 1981 by a grant from the U. S. Office of Education.

The Series was created as much by default as by design. The original plan was to bring a Southeast Asia specialist to Hawaii for the spring semester of every year during the course of the grant. Insufficient lead-time hampered recruitment activities that first year, however, and it was decided instead to invite five scholars, representing different disciplines or geographical areas, to join us for one week each during the semester. The visits were to provide Hawaii Southeast Asia scholars, students, and interested members of the community with an opportunity to become acquainted at first hand with the work of our Mainland and Asian colleagues and to exchange ideas with leading scholars in the field. The success of the Distinguished Scholars Series was immediate and pronounced, so much so that it remains an integral part of our program and has served as a model for other programs at the University.

Each scholar was involved in a variety of activities during his or her stay in Hawaii. Two public lectures were scheduled. The first was the scholarly presentation for the academic community that is included in this volume. The second was a talk on a more general topic that was designed for nonspecialist and community audiences, although the detail of and discussion at these presentations frequently rivaled those of the major paper.

In addition to the two lectures, each scholar often gave several classroom presentations in his or her specific discipline, held informal meetings with Southeast Asia faculty members and students on the University of Hawaii campus, and spoke with interested individuals and groups from the community. The combination of lectures, meetings, seminars, consultations, and social gatherings produced a demanding schedule for our guests who had to contend with jet lag but elicited enthusiasm and admiration from those of us who were beneficiaries.

We chose a broad, general topic for our first year's visiting scholars--"Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia"--one that could

provide a unifying theme to accommodate the wide range of academic disciplines and interests we desired and also give each scholar the freedom to draw upon his or her preferred areas of inquiry or current research. The five papers presented here, therefore, do not culminate in any structured conclusion; rather they broaden our insights and contribute to our awareness of the interrelationships within Southeast Asian scholarship.

Michael Aung-Thwin's opening lecture set the tone for the entire semester's program. He confronts the problems inherent in cultural conceptions of change and continuity, pointing out that there are fundamental differences in the way that Western and non-Western societies record historical change. He shows how the cultural assumptions of Burma can be discovered through an analysis of the Burmese chronicle tradition and emphasizes the value of historical chronicles as cultural statements.

Benedict R. Anderson, in a typically provocative and stimulating paper, offers the thesis that Javanese writers have chosen the Indonesian language as a vehicle for much modern Indonesian literature not only because of the need to address the non-Javanese speaking members of Indonesian society but because freedom from the structure of Javanese language also provides a means of escaping the complex patterning of Javanese culture. Paradoxically, Anderson argues, the invisible presence of Javanese language and literature is, for Javanese writing in Indonesian, like a "black hole," an entity perceived by its absence. And it is this black hole that influences their creativity.

T. K. Sabapathy's discussion of tradition and modernity in Southeast Asian art explores the impact of a select group of Chinese artists, referred to as the "Nanyang artists," who immigrated to Singapore in the 1930s and 1940s and whose innovative work influenced the development of modern art in Singapore and Malaysia.

Doreen Fernandez's paper on contemporary Philippine theatre is based on the thesis that the political situation of the past decade has brought about the theatre's return to its origins as a "theatre of communion--community born, centered, and directed." She traces the development of Philippine theatre through periods of Spanish and American colonization up to the present and, citing numerous contemporary playwrights and their productions, emphasizes the vitality and significance of modern Philippine drama.

Lucien Hanks addresses the phenomenon of a "heritage of defeat"--an awareness of defeats both actual and borrowed--among four hill tribes in northern Thailand that is used to protect tradition or promote change that will help insure the survival of the tribe. His thesis, that although change is inevitable it blends with tradition to provide a surviving continuity of culture, is the theme that is touched upon in varying degrees by every contributor to this collection.

Prophecies, Omens, and Dialogue:

Tools of the Trade in Burmese Historiography

Michael Aung-Thwin

The study of Southeast Asian history presents a special intellectual problem, since our working conceptions of the discipline of history have been shaped almost entirely by Western historians writing about the West. Standards of historical writing are not universal, however. Conceptions of history shaped in the tradition of Herodotus, Thucydides, von Ranke and company, do not fully or automatically apply to the study of Indian, Japanese, or Burmese history. These societies had their own "indigenous conceptual systems," that is, they had a unique and often implicit criteria of right and wrong, a special method of establishing legality, legitimacy, and authority. Until we recognize and understand the unique cultural foundation on which these societies rest, we will not be able to understand their history or write it. How the cultural assumptions of one of these societies, that of Burma, can be discovered by an analysis of its chronicle tradition is the subject of this essay.

The problem is challenging. The sources of Burmese history rarely deal explicitly with cultural values and assumptions, because their authors take for granted that the reader is familiar with them. Consequently the scholar must not only turn to a wide range of sources--poems, ballads, myth--but must do so with a special set of interpretive tools. In Burmese history these tools, the technique of document exegesis, can be derived from the rich tradition of historical chronicles. These chronicles, properly interpreted, might yield the crucial cultural "statements" vital to historical understanding--the same as those which might be discovered in other circumstances by structural analysis.

From the chronicles, to be more specific, can be extracted the ingredients commonly viewed as essential for intellectual history: conceptions of man, of order and disorder, of the state, leadership,

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legitimacy, authority--in short, the assumptions on which society was based and in which the authors of historical documents were themselves immersed. By identifying and understanding these assumptions, we can take a small step toward mastering the guiding conceptions of Burmese historiography. By understanding better the Burmese conception of the historical past, we may, by cross-cultural comparison, gain new insights into the Western historiographical tradition.

Conceptions of Change and Continuity

The concept of change is basic to the writing of history. One of the areas in which fundamental differences arise between East and West is precisely the conceptions of change as revealed by their historiography. In Western historical writing, societies are seen to change inevitably and significantly. Change, moreover, is equated in Western thought with progress, and progress is highly valued. Therefore, originality or newness are cherished goals. In contrast, in Asia (and particularly Burma), although change is indeed viewed as inevitable, it is seldom associated with progress; and, therefore, innovation and newness are not goals highly sought after. Custom and tradition of the "purer past" are models to be emulated. However, in both traditions, discrepancies exist between ideals and society as it is. What the West often prizes as new and original may in fact be quite old; and the East is often forced to be innovative, severing itself from traditional practices, and is left to justify those actions in a culture that euphemized the past. Both cultures, consequently, use disguises: the West frequently attempts to present traditional things as new and original, while in the East, things that are in fact new or original are cloaked in traditional legitimacy. One of the ways Burmese historians accomplished this goal was by the use of three literary devices in their chronicles: prophecies, omens, and dialogue. They were used as "tools" to disguise change and accentuate continuity. To these we must now turn to understand the intent (and therefore the assumptions) with which Burmese history was written.

To early Burmese historians and particularly to the Burmese chroniclers from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries (the subject of this essay), history was written to establish a standard set by an ideal past. Written history was expected to identify a model cast of characters, whom living men and women (especially royalty) should attempt to emulate or (if evil) avoid. History was written not for its own sake, but to substantiate, by historical example, beliefs and truths found in religion and politics. History was written, not for intrinsic reasons, but to serve as a means to other ends. Each major event was used by the chroniclers to express a moral principle, explicit or more likely implicit, from which present rulers should learn. History, the chroniclers wrote, was to be used as a standard for all affairs of state and religion.¹

By the use of prophecies, omens, and dialogues, the early chroniclers imparted to narrative history the moral, didactic, often miraculous content it was expected to have. Burmese chronicles, if they are to be

understood, must be read with an understanding and an interest in both the context in which they were written as well as the intent of the writers. Admittedly, we should be wary of viewing origin myths and other such events used for symbolic purposes as factual. But at the same time, to simply dismiss them as legend and myth, unworthy of history, avoids the problem; for only in these chronicles can we find the information needed for narrative history. Other sources for institutional history are plentiful--such as revenue records, administrative files, donative inscriptions--but only in the chronicles is history as we know it recorded. An example will illustrate the problem. The Burmese histories claimed that the kingdom of Tagaung in northern Burma was the first dynasty of the Burmans and that its origins can be traced to Buddhist India in the early centuries B.C. As Buddhists, the Burmans quite obviously were attempting to link their origins with the tribe to which the Buddha belonged, the Sakyans of Kapilavastu in India. Archaeology has shown that indeed Tagaung was a historical site,² but dated it much later. It has also shown that the direction of cultural development in Burma moved *south to north* rather than the reverse, as the Tagaung myth implied. On the one hand, then, Tagaung is a confirmed historical site but dated too early; yet on the other, it was incorporated in the old histories centuries before archaeology was even considered an academic discipline. With proper cultural connections, the myth can be made to yield historical truth. The barrier to understanding is the Western assumption that *factual statements of an empirical nature and statements of belief concerning a conceptual system must not appear in the same text*, particularly the same sentence. In other words, the examination of the context in which the chronicles were written and the intent of their authors are critical if we are to succeed in writing sober Burmese history. And to do so, we must view prophecies, omens, and dialogue as "tools" which might reveal perceptions of moral order (continuity) and disorder (change), not as superstition of "primitive" Burmese who ignored the distinction between empirical truth and symbolic truth. (The distinction was known, but not readily admitted, for symbols were as meaningful as--and certainly more powerful than--empirical events were.) Such a textual analysis has not been attempted before in Burmese studies; to apply it to the early Burmese chronicles is a first, small step in the understanding of Burmese historical sources.³

The Burmese chronicle tradition is a long and varied one. Chronicles were written mainly by secular members of the court for the benefit of their contemporary rulers. The "raw data" for the accounts were extensive, daily records kept by scribes and stored in the royal palace. Sometimes one individual wrote the history of the dynasty during which he lived; at other times, a team of scholars attempted to write a "national" history treating the various dynasties that had ruled Burma as Burmese even though some had been of different ethnic background. But in every case, one chronicle was built upon another; that is, later ones always incorporated parts of earlier chronicles, often verbatim. (This was part of the tradition of preserving the past, not changing it.) What "revisionism" occurred did not deal with "factual" events *per se* but with the significance, in religious or moral terms, of those events. Most chronicles are late, dating to the seventeenth century and after, though the earliest surviving palm-leaf manuscript can be

traced to the fifteenth century. Thenceforth, every dynasty compiled one or more accounts of its reign until the last one, which was conquered by the British in 1886. Survivors of that dynasty continued its history until Burma's last king died in British-forced exile in 1916. At this point, we could say that the Burmese chronicle tradition came to an end.

Prophecies (*byadeik*)

One of the main purposes of prophecies concerns legitimacy. A family, dynasty, or individual ruler as well as their capital city, town, or village--the geographical area from which they came--all had to be legitimized in order to be part of the Burmese royal tradition. The ultimate criterion for legitimation was the Buddha or Buddhist doctrine. By tracing the first dynasty of the Burmans to immigrants from the Sakyans to which the Buddha was said to belong, Burma's subsequent ruling families established a direct link to the descendants of the Buddha. This linkage was usually achieved by incorporating into the chronicle a typical motif found in Buddhist and Burmese literature: it is what I have called the Buddha-Ananda motif. Buddha would smile, Ananda his chief disciple would ask why, and Buddha would reply that at this site, under these circumstances, a city would be founded that would last the predicted five thousand years of the Religion.⁴ Consequently, the origin-myths of many important towns in Burmese history begin with such a prophecy. Following the prophecy, the chronicle normally recounts a part-historical, part-folk legend for which the locality was known; and finally, the story would record events based on more reliable contemporary records. Well-known folk tales, interspersed between stories of the Buddha in a well-organized narrative, therefore, inspired a good deal of confidence in the veracity of any account. One of the functions of prophecies then, was to provide "divine" sanction to historically important sites.⁵ The capitals of all the dynasties of Burma received prophecies in which the Buddha-Ananda motif was used and were exclusively entitled "cities with prophecies."⁶

Prophecies were also used with the emergence of "great kings," who, in the judgment of the chroniclers and folk memory, had upheld and promoted the welfare of Buddhism, for the king above all else was considered the defender of the faith. But kings with prophecies, or whose reign commanded a prophecy, were often usurpers: they either had not been formally appointed heir or had not been part of the recognized royal family at all. The *byadeik* was used in these cases to affirm that their reigns had been sanctioned by the "highest authorities" even though, (or precisely because), they had not followed traditional succession rules. This process of legitimation by *byadeik* was used particularly if the reigns had been highly successful and subsequently upheld tradition in a manner considered to be authentic and proper. In order to preserve the royal blood, a usurper once established would then marry the last chief queen of the preceding ruler, thereby passing legitimacy to his own, otherwise illegitimate, descendants.

The Law of *Karma* in Buddhism states that whatever one sows, one shall reap. All present situations, such as rank in society, have been

determined by actions in one's previous lives, and present actions will determine future events and the status into which a person is re-born. If a usurper were successful, it implied that his past behavior had been so exemplary as to enable him to dispose of a person of the magnitude of a king, whose status had also been determined by his own past actions. "Retroactive *karma*," then, was a major ingredient in Burmese political ideology and was used implicitly to justify usurpation even though it violated tradition and custom. But good *karma* alone did not imply royal blood: therefore, a usurper normally married the chief queen, the carrier of royal blood. Change was thereby legitimated by rituals and justified *ex post facto* as part of the karmic principle.

At the same time, prophecies were also used for kings who had been true to tradition, followed all the rules, but who had been deposed. If *karma* determined status, how could misfortune or evil befall a person with the rank of king? King Thado Minbya's reign (fourteenth-fifteenth century), for example, had received a prophecy as had his city. But chroniclers who wrote subsequent to the event knew that the king and his city had come to an inglorious end, despite the original prophecy. To explain this apparent contradiction, the chroniclers added another prophecy, that although this king was strong in *dana* (generosity, gift giving, especially characterized by such actions as temple construction) he was weak in *sila* (religious duty, such as meditation, learning the scriptures, and general patronage of the Buddhist Church).⁷ Knowing that Ava was subsequently destroyed by the "barbarians," the historians had set the stage, so to speak, for the sad event when Ava, its temples and monasteries, its clergy and citizens were destroyed. Yet Ava had truly been a Buddhist city. Its kings were "good": they built magnificent temples, patronized the Religion, and provided for the welfare of the people, the ultimate and essential criteria for receiving a favorable record of rule. In order to "explain" this apparent contradiction, the prophecy about Thado Minbya's *sila* was added. When the uncomfortable event appeared in the text, the reader was reminded of the prophecy, and the event was implicitly relegated to the moral law of cause and effect--*karma*.

Thus *karma* created and *karma* destroyed. To Western historiography, it is a circular argument but to cultures in which Buddhist thought is a major ingredient of political ideology, the argument is infallible; for everything else in the natural and supernatural world operates in cycles including time, space, and, of course, history. Because of *karma*, evil persons *did* become kings; usurpers *did* ascend the throne; the Religion *did* become "impure"; noble cities *were* destroyed. Events contrary to the ideal manner in which society was supposed to evolve were not suppressed or omitted from the daily narrative kept by court scribes: rather they were "explained" by the use of prophecies when the chronicle was subsequently written. Prophecies functioned, then, as justification of events that often contradicted parts of the belief system, and were used further to give importance to such occasions as the founding of a *new* dynasty and capital or the destruction of old ones.

Omens (*nimeit*)

The omen or ominous event appeared in either natural or supernatural form. Occurrences which deviated from the way things were supposed to happen were usually accompanied by omens. Their setting included coincidences, dreams of royalty, battles, births and deaths of heroes, and other such "powerful" and auspicious occasions. As in prophecies, omens would occur at succession disputes. When Prince Sawlu, the designated heir of the twelfth-century Pagan Dynasty, was a child he ate the egg placed underneath the food rather than the one placed at the top. The wise men saw it and prophesied that during his reign, the royal line would break. This ominous event was necessary; for King Kyanzittha, a highly popular folk-hero whose royalty was questionable, replaced Sawlu, the legitimate heir. On the one hand, the chroniclers did not wish to be explicit about a popular king's non-royal background, while on the other, they knew that something, however implicit, had to be said about events that broke with custom. Sawlu's ominous behavior and the judgment of the wise, inserted by the chroniclers, explained those uncomfortable occurrences.

There were other types of physical omens which present problems of interpretation. For example, when Ava was destroyed in A.D. 1527, spirits were said to enter temples, planets moved in strange ways, eclipses and earthquakes occurred, temples cried, and lunar constellations moved out of sequence. It is known that eclipses, earthquakes, and lunar misalignments did not occur on happy occasions; yet, their precise meaning is ambiguous. To be explicit, however, was not a desired literary trait either; innuendo was a preferred technique. On these occasions, one can only speculate as to their precise intent or simply relegate such passages to literature's many devices for creating mood. Similarly, when passing moral judgment on a king, a chronicler seldom stated directly that he was "bad"; instead, manipulation of literary and other indirect methods were used to make a point. For example, the proper language classifier that should have been used for a king would be deliberately exchanged with that used for a dog, or words reserved for monks and holy objects would be replaced by those used for ordinary laymen. In Burmese, each noun is followed by a classifier, which must correspond to the sex, rank, and status of that noun. For example, one would say in English, a *piece* of paper, a *bunch* of grapes, a *pair* of pants, a *bevy* of girls. In Burmese, these classifiers (pair, bunch, bevy) follow rather than precede the noun. More important, they are hierarchic: that is, one cannot use a *bevy* for nuns, who are spiritually superior to lay women. Such usage by scholars who knew better, therefore, must be regarded as a deliberate attempt to mar the characters involved. Thus when the classifier for a dog or other animals (*kaung*)--never properly used with humans, least of all kings--was used, the reader immediately knew something was amiss and concluded that the king was behaving like a dog.⁸

Like prophecies, omens were used to reaffirm the necessity of following tradition. When kings of non-royal birth emerged victorious, were successful, and subsequently upheld tradition, supernatural events

were created either to link them with past royalty through genealogical manipulation; if not that, their non-royal birth was accepted but they were made reincarnations of deities or past royalty. King Tabinshwehti of the sixteenth century was one of the most successful, dynamic, and exemplary kings in Burmese history. But his mother had been a "commoner" to whom his father, the then king, had taken a fancy. Apparently, her lineage was too well known to manipulate successfully, so the girl was stated to possess all the marks of a superior person and made into a queen, though not chief queen. One day, waiting on the king, who was asleep, she let out a scream, waking him up. The king asked what had happened. She replied that the "Sun King had entered her womb." (The Solar Dynasty was the mythical ancestral family of many royal dynasties throughout the Mid-east, South and Southeast Asia, including those of Iran, India, and Burma.) The king then stated that if she bore him a son, he would make her chief queen despite the rules. The child was a boy and the king named him Tabinshwehti, "Lord of the Golden Umbrella" (a typical title for a king, whose symbol of royalty and authority was the gold umbrella). When the king's advisors asked if he had named the boy, the king told them what his name was and the advisors replied that with him, the royal line should break.

Of course, the historian knew that Tabinshwehti's successor was his brother-in-law who was even more successful than he, and not, as the rules of succession demanded, the eldest son by the chief queen. He also knew that Tabinshwehti would eventually defeat the Mons--the ethnic group likeliest to present a challenge to Burman rule--and reunite Burma under one dynasty once more. The chronicler then used this knowledge to create a coincidence. In it, a prince under a past Mon dynasty had been treated unjustly and killed and was to be re-born in the person of Tabinshwehti. According to the story, Tabinshwehti with a few daring men had gone to the famous Shwe Mudaw Pagoda, the symbol of Mon independence in the heart of Mon territory, to have his ears pierced. The Mons were unable to apprehend him and his flaunting defiance of their military impotence in their own territory was colorfully recounted by the court historian. Then the author revived the story of the Mon prince, who, prior to being executed, had worshipped at this very same pagoda, saying, "My life is about to be ended by no fault of my own; if it is true that I am without fault, let me enter the womb of the Burmese kings and when of age, let me come and put the . . . Mons under my suzerainty."⁹ Thus at the same pagoda that the Mon prince prayed for karmic justice, Tabinshwehti's first and dramatic defiance of Mon power and authority began. It was a coincidence filled with meaning to those who appreciated the political symbolism of the Shwe Mudaw Pagoda in Mon-Burman political relations, who sincerely believed in reincarnation and karmic justice, and who felt that coincidences like these were, in themselves, extremely "powerful" historical events.

Similarly, the ominous background of King Alaungpaya, the creator of the last Burmese dynasty (1750-1886), justified "innovation" and the establishment of something "new." When he was born (after ten months) the earth quaked, the ground cracked. As a child, he was

precocious, and when he reached age twenty-two, all the signs of a *min-laung* (imminent king) were attributed to him. Everyone heard of those omens and awaited his arrival so that he might bring order out of the chaos that Burma was at that time experiencing. The reigning king heard of these stories and ordered a "massacre of the infants" (in the manner of King Herod). But like King Kyanzittha of Pagan (and Jesus of Nazareth), Alaungpaya escaped the search to become the unifier of the last Burmese dynasty. These omens and coincidences gave karmic and "divine" dimensions to Alaungpaya's commoner background and gave credence to the genealogical ties which the authors had attempted to make between his family and that of Pagan, the first kingdom of the Burmans.

These and other examples illustrate that kings, whose rise to power was accompanied by omens and prophecies in Burmese chronicles, were usually, even if royal, either not in direct line for the throne or were creators of *new* dynasties. Because ominous events and coincidences were instigated by supernatural forces beyond human control, non-traditional and non-customary behavior could be accepted as legitimate. Omens and prophecies therefore allowed innovation and creativity a significant niche in an otherwise tradition-bound society.

Dialogue

To have used the word "speeches" instead of "dialogue" would immediately remind historians of the historiographic issues involved in this device, made conspicuous by Herodotus and Thucydides. But the device used in Burmese chronicles was more than speech making; it included admonitions, advice, and ordinary conversations. For want of a better term, the word dialogue is meant to include a variety of literary forms of direct communication. Unlike the often subtle use of ominous events or the sometimes ambiguous intent of prophecies, the direct and explicit statements of dialogue made by characters in the history were even more unequivocal. These were judgments made by mortals, near-peers of kings, and wise ministers of court, not by the symbols inherent in supernatural events. They established standards by which contemporary rulers should live. If narrative history and its supernatural forms of justification for royal action left some doubt as to exactly what the morality in an event was, "dialogue" made certain that the point was not missed. And, as one would expect, dialogue appeared on prophetic and ominous occasions.

The classic example is the chastising of thirteenth-century King Narathihapade of Pagan by his chief queen on the eve of the political demise of their dynasty, for which the king was made scapegoat by nineteenth-century historians. He was described in epithets not very complimentary of anyone, least of all a king, and was accused of tearing down religious edifices to build fortifications. The chronicles implied that for having done such an evil deed, the king would spend an eon in an existence (perhaps as an animal) less than human. The problem for the chroniclers was to explain how such a magnificent

Buddhist kingdom, the founder of the classical Burmese state, had come to such a sad end at the hands of the Mongols. They did it by allowing Queen Saw to reproach the king, and this reproach established a standard for all kings thenceforth. It also revealed how Burmese historians viewed historical causation.

The queen first scolded the king by telling him that he had failed to listen to her advice sooner, which was: "Bore not thy country's belly, degrade thy country's forehead, lay down thy country's banner, poke thy country's eye, break thy country's eyetooth, sully thy country's face, cut-off thy country's feet and hands."¹⁰ But, she continued, "Thou woudst not hearken to my words; and now it is hard indeed for the realm and villages to prosper!"¹¹ When the king asked for clarification--an added insult, for the meaning should have been clear to anyone--Queen Saw explained. And this particular explanation became a standard of behavior for all future kings.

Bore not thy country's belly--that is, cast not reproach upon the rich when they are guiltless, for they are as the belly of thy kingdom. Seize not nor spoil them of their goods, and gold and silver. When rich men died, though they had sons and daughters to inherit, they gat not their inheritance. To seize their goods and squander them till all is gone, this it is to bore thy country's belly. Abase not thy country's forehead--that is, deal not harshly in thy reckless choler with thy chief and faithful councillors and captains, who are as thy country's forehead. Fell not thy country's banner--that is, wax not wroth nor rage blindly against the wise men, monks and hermits, who are as thy country's banner. Pluck not out thy country's eye--that is, be not wroth and furious as a devil, without let or thwarting of thine anger, against thy wise chaplains learned in the *Pitakas* and *Vedas*, who are as thy country's eye. Break not thy country's tusks--that is, do not chafe and fume, heedless of the future, against the members of thy family, who are as thy country's tusks. Sully not thy country's face--that is, take not by force another's children who are as the mirror of their parents, their husbands, or sons, for such are as thy country's face. Cut not thy country's feet and hands--that is, kill not in anger, regardless of the future and the present, thy soldiers who are as thy country's feet and hands.¹²

Dialogue was, however, not always this straightforward. Occasionally, sarcasm was used to make a point. Again the chroniclers chose to admonish this same king. Narathihapade had fled to the delta, some three hundred miles south of the capital, when the Mongols attacked, but subsequently returned and stopped at Prome, halfway between the delta and Pagan. His retinue was in disarray. His servants said to the king, who had demanded three hundred dishes of curry every meal, that "We cannot find thee three hundred dishes of salted and spice, and they set around him only an hundred

and fifty dishes. And the king wept, and covering his face . . . cried, 'alas! I am a poor man!'"¹³

Advice given by ministers to kings in the past was often meant for contemporaries of the author. This was a method for criticism without fear of punishment. In present spoken usage, this particular approach is called *saung pyaw*, a sarcastic innuendo referring to disguised criticism or public slander, which though directed at (say) your child, is in reality meant for a nearby person who can also hear one's statement, and for whom the criticism is in fact meant. It avoided direct (and in Burmese society, demeaning) confrontation and in the following example, perhaps execution. The story revolved around the decision in 1374 of whether or not to annex a neighboring kingdom. A wise uncle of the then reigning king stepped forward and argued against annexation, giving many convincing reasons. The author of this particular history was writing, however, in the eighteenth century, and the king he was serving then was also contemplating annexation of that same kingdom. The dialogue in this case was actually meant for this eighteenth-century monarch not the fourteenth-century king.

Dialogue also revealed essential principles that governed aspects of the Burmese conceptual system which otherwise might have been lost to later historians. When Saw Rahan, a cucumber farmer, killed the reigning king who had plucked a cucumber from his garden, the king's aide said "'Ho! farmer, why strikest thou our master?'" He answered, "'Thy king hath plucked and eaten my cucumber. Did I not [do] well to strike him?'" And the aide "spake winding words and said, 'O farmer, he who slayeth a king, becometh a king.'"¹⁴ "Retroactive *karma*," an essential ingredient in Burmese conceptions of kingship, was reaffirmed. Then the authors, not without sarcasm, had the aide convince the farmer that being a king was not so bad, that it was certainly better than tending to cucumbers. The farmer with great incredulity replied, "'Is it so?'" But after Saw Rahan had become king, the Mahāgiri Nat, spirit-guardian, ancestor of all royal dynasties, refused to speak to the king or accept any food offerings made by him. The king then questioned his advisors who replied, "Because you are not of royal blood, the Nat [spirit] King refuses to speak . . .; give your son in marriage to Shwe On Thi, the royal daughter [of his predecessor], and make him Heir Apparent."¹⁵ So the king gave his son in marriage to Shwe On Thi so that the royal line could continue. Though implicit in this case, dialogue nevertheless revealed that successful usurpation could be justified, although not encouraged, if certain essential rituals were followed that preserved the sanctity of royalty and that the latter was determined by the female side of the lineage. The Mahāgiri Nat, by demanding that proper and traditional rituals be followed, "explained" the contradiction between Buddhist beliefs in karmic law ("he who slayeth a king becometh a king") and the Law of Impermanence¹⁶ on the one hand, and the practice of hereditary succession and desire for such continuity on the other.

Conclusions

A major concern of Burmese chroniclers was to preserve the past, not for its own sake, but to provide examples for contemporary, usually royal behavior. This concept of the past reaffirmed Burmese values with regard to tradition and custom. And to this end, new and innovative events were often disguised as old and customary. The "tools" that were used in these disguises were prophecies, omens, and dialogue. Change, which in essence is innovation, is thus made to wear the cloak of tradition. However, disguises used by the chroniclers covered only those parts of the picture that were "uncomfortable"--such as the acceptance of the non-royal, usurping folk-hero--and not the essential principles that shaped Burmese society nor the essential facts (events) of narrative history. These were, to be sure, embellished, elaborated beyond a degree that would have been acceptable to von Ranke, and on the whole, placed carefully in a "meaningful" context. The fundamental problem for Burmese historians was the contradiction--and this was a major dialectic in its conceptual system--between the desire for continuity on the one hand and the belief in the (Buddhist) Law of Impermanence on the other. If, as the belief goes, everything is impermanent, change must be continuous. Where then is continuity? Moreover, Burmese narrative history was filled with changes: in dynasties, capitals, and kings. Yet, all of these discontinuous realities had not fundamentally altered the institutions of Burmese society either. Dynasties claimed descent from legitimating (religious) sources, yet they had clearly emerged from secular backgrounds; capitals claimed divine prophecies for their origins, yet battled each other; kings claimed royal birth, yet many had been commoners; the Sangha (Buddhist Church) claimed purity of doctrine and behavior, yet kings periodically had to "purify" it. The circular argument of the Law of *Karma* "explained" some of these discrepancies, while rituals also helped to bridge the gaps of discontinuity: coronations, marriage rites, temple building--all fulfilled the requirement that tradition be preserved.

But ritual and karmic justification were not sufficient. One needed supernatural and natural phenomena, woven convincingly around narrative history, to help uphold the belief in continuity. Not unlike the "speeches" of Herodotus and Thucydides, which were used to provide drama to events, sway the reader to a preferred point of view, or introduce certain philosophical concepts, Burmese historians used prophecies, omens, and dialogue to do much the same thing, albeit to a greater degree. With these historiographic devices, Buddhism was introduced into and preserved in Burma in its "pure" (orthodox) form, the royal blood passed legitimately from one dynasty to the next, exemplary standards for royal behavior were articulated, the establishment of capitals and centers of power received "divine" sanction, and the destruction of cherished institutions was "explained." All these depicted Burmese society in its ideal form despite events that suggested otherwise. Prophecies, omens, and dialogue bridged the ideological gap between the ever-changing events of narrative history (and the Law of Impermanence) and the persistent traditions and institutions of custom-valued society (and the desire for continuity). To put it

another way, the discontinuity of *text* was embellished to serve the continuity of *context*.

NOTES

1. *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, trans. by Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce (Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960), p. ix.
2. U Aung Thaw, ed., *Historical Sites in Burma* (Rangoon: Ministry of Union Culture, 1972), pp. 99-103.
3. Although not concerned with the type of problems that this paper is, Victor Lieberman's excellent article on a religious chronicle is the only other one of its kind in the English language where a thorough analysis of a Burmese text was made. See his "A New Look at the *Sāsanavamsa*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 39 (1976): 137-149.
4. *Hmanan Mahayazawindawgyi* [The Great Royal Glass Palace Chronicle] (Rangoon: Pyigyī Mandain Pitakat Press, 1962), 1: 188 is but one of many examples. Prophecies were not limited to events that occurred in the remote past; often kings "prophecied" retroactively; that is, a prophecy was made of contemporary conditions. For such an example, see King Kyanzittha's inscription as translated in *Epigraphia Birmanica*, pt. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), 1: 113-114.
5. Technically, Buddha was not divine but human, even though he is in practice worshipped as divine.
6. Shin Thilawuntha, *Yazawinkyaw* [The Celebrated Chronicle] (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1965), p. 121; *Kongkaungset Mahayazawindawgyi* [The Great Royal Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty] (Rangoon: Layti Mandain Press, 1967), 1: 545; 2: 311-313; 3: 285-286.
7. Twinthintaik Wun Mahasithu, *Twinthin Myaroma Yazawinthit* [Twinthin's New Royal Chronicle of Burma] (Rangoon: Mingala Ponheit Press, 1968), 1: 197-200.
8. My thanks are due to Prof. Alton Becker for this insight with regard to the deliberate use of classifiers. For an example in the chronicles, see Twinthintaik, *Twinthin Myaroma*, p. 393.
9. *Twinthin Myaroma*, p. 444. That the Burmans acquired royalty by the reincarnation of a Mon and not a Burman prince suggests that the concept of royalty was not confined by ethnic differences and that the criteria may be commonly shared among both groups, though political rivals. The alleged animosity between Burmans and Mons--for many years argued to have been a theme in Burmese history--is a superficial analysis of *events*, ignoring institutional realities.

For an extended analysis of this theme, see Victor Lieberman's "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, 3 (1978): 455-482. The original critic of the theme of Mon-Burman rivalry was of course F. K. Lehman, whose article pioneered the way for other studies. See "Ethnic Categories in Burma and the Theory of Social Systems," in Peter Kunstadter, ed. *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 93-124.

10. U Kala, *Mahayazawindawgyi* [The Great Royal Chronicle] (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1960), 1: 292.
11. *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, p. 177.
12. *Glass Palace*, p. 178.
13. *Glass Palace*, p. 177.
14. *Glass Palace*, p. 58.
15. *Twinthin Myamma*, p. 65.
16. Buddhist doctrine asserts that everything in this world is inherently impermanent and will eventually decay and be destroyed. It is a concept that affirms *change* rather than *continuity*.

Sembah-Sumpah (Courtesy and Curses)

The Politics of Language and Javanese Culture

Benedict R. Anderson

Sebuah benda yang kuperkirakan agak panjang telah dipukul-pukulkan lembut pada kepalaku yang tidak bertopi. Betapa kurangajaranya makhluk yang harus kumuliakan ini. Setiap pukulan lembut harus kusambut dengan sembah terimakasih pula. Keparat!

Setelah lima kali memukul, benda itu ditariknya, kini tergantung di samping kursi: cambuk kuda tunggangan dari kemaluan sapi jantan dengan tangkai tertutup kulit pilihan, tipis.

"Kau!" tegurnya lemah, parau.

"Sahaya Tuanku Gusti Kanjeng Bupati," kata mulutku, dan seperti mesin tanganku mengangkat sembah yang kesekian kali, dan hatiku menyumpah entah untuk ke berapa kali.

What I sensed to be a longish object was being gently rapped upon my bowed, bared head. How insolent this creature I was forced to honor! For I had to welcome each soft blow with a respectful *sembah* [gesture of respect performed by placing the palms together in front of, and at right angles to, the face]. God damn it!

After five of these blows, he withdrew the object, which now hung down by the side of his chair: it was a riding-crop made from a bull's pizzle, the haft wrapped in fine, thin leather.

"You!" he addressed me in a soft, hoarse voice.

"Your humble servant, My Honored Lord," said my mouth; and like a machine my hands moved up to make yet another *sembah*, while my heart swore for the umpteenth time.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia*
(Man's Earth), p. 109.

I used to think of it as a black hole. Here was a literary tradition going back over a thousand years--as old as French and English literature, older than Russian. Here was a sophisticated corpus of writing produced by and for a few hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of men and women, over centuries in which 90 percent of a population numbering no more than two or three million was probably illiterate. Here was a vocabulary of untold richness: Prof. Pigeaud's Javanese-Dutch dictionary contains over 40,000 headings (while Prof. Echols' Indonesian-English dictionary has only 12,000, and even W. S. Purwadarminta's Indonesian-Indonesian lexicon has only about 27,000).¹ And here was a language which in our own time flourishes in countless homes, offices, markets, and schools, in *wayang* performances, on the radio, in song, and in ritual. Yet today, when the population has probably passed 60 million and the percentage of illiterates has surely fallen below 40 percent, why have such cultural descendants of Prapanca and Tantular, the two Jasadipuras and Ronggowarsita, as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Marco Kartodikromo, Rendra, Semaun, Goenawan Mohammad, and so many others, *not* been writing in Javanese? Surely for most of them it has been the language of their childhood homes, youthful love affairs, close friendships, and marriages? Surely in the memories of most linger *wayang* stories and fragments of *tembang* (type of Javanese song)? The old nationalist leader Dr. Soetomo had said, *kacang mangsa ninggal lanjaran*, "how would the bean ever leave the bean-pole?"² But if they had not left their bean-poles, these beans certainly did not seem to be twining their way straight up them. Into what black hole then had Javanese literature disappeared?³ Why? And indeed when? After all, Sundanese literature seemed to have survived. After all, *Buiten Het Gareel* (Out of Harness), one of the half-dozen best novels ever written by an Indonesian, was originally penned in Sundanese.⁴

The most obvious explanations for the black hole are political and economic. While I do not find them adequate in themselves, they are of sufficient interest for it to be worth discussing them briefly before turning to what I hope will be a useful alternative line of analysis.

The first kind of explanation emphasizes the nexus between the character and thrust of Dutch imperialism, the development of print-capitalism, and the availability of an indigenous, interinsular lingua franca (what some Dutchmen nastily called *brabbels-Maleisch*, gibberish-Malay). The argument goes more or less as follows: In being able not merely to hang on to their small eighteenth-century possessions in Southeast Asia but to expand them enormously in the period from 1830 to 1910, the Dutch were extremely lucky, for by then Holland had become a fourth-rate European power, on the order of Portugal and Belgium.⁵ Her luck (like that of Belgium and Portugal) lay in her strategic importance to Britain, the superpower of the nineteenth century. To maintain its own military security, further its balance-of-power politique in northern Europe, and safeguard its domination of the Mediterranean, Britain had every interest in protecting these small, weak states, which either faced it across the channel and controlled the riverine gateways to Central Europe (the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Scheldt) or commanded access to the Straits of Gibraltar. In East Asia, Holland was a useful subordinate ally against Britain's main

rival, France. Such were the considerations that lay behind the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824, whereby London restored to The Hague most of the Asian empire it had captured with such utter ease during the Napoleonic Wars.⁶ Nor did the British seriously attempt to block the Dutch as the latter expanded their control over Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Indonesia Timur between 1830 and 1910.⁷ Had Dutch power in the nineteenth century been confined to Java, as it easily might have been, the language of a twentieth-century, ex-colonial Javanese nation-state would probably have been Javanese. But by 1910, the now huge Dutch empire in the East covered so many important ethnolinguistic groups that the "Javanese option" was essentially eliminated. As Hoffman has ably shown in a recent article, the Dutch colonial regime was both the earliest and the most energetic promoter of what later became *bahasa Indonesia*, partly because it had no serious intention of making Dutch the language of interracial colonial life, partly because it needed a single vehicle of communication for its heterogeneous empire.⁸ Thus already in the nineteenth century Javanese had become simply a convenience for administering one part--even if still perhaps the most important part--of the colony. In other words, the status of Javanese had dropped to that of a provincial language by the end of the Cultuurstelsel (1870). In the expanding school-system of the early twentieth century, "Maleisch" became increasingly important for generating the subordinate native cadres needed to man the rapidly expanding state and corporate bureaucracies, both of which required their staffs to handle matters of interisland importance and often to serve in areas well outside their ethnolinguistic homelands. Finally--so the argument goes--print-capitalism contributed to this process, since the actual and potential markets for printed texts in "Maleisch" were obviously larger than those for Javanese.

The first part of this argument has some plausibility. Can we doubt that if Java had remained a British colony from 1811 to 1945 (perhaps united administratively with Malaya and Sumatra) much of the modern literature produced there would, as in Ghana, Nigeria, India, and other British imperial possessions, have been written in English? Or that if the Dutch empire had been confined to Java Javanese would be a national language today? Of its final component I am less convinced. Was the market really of that importance? On this question the work of Nidhi Aeusrivongse is very illuminating.⁹ After emphasizing the central role played by the colonial regime's Balai Pustaka (formally set up in 1917) in the printing and dissemination of indigenous works of literature, he nonetheless points out that even in 1938, no more than four hundred thousand people, out of a total population of about seventy million, checked out books from the three thousand or so reading-room libraries it had set up--that is, less than 0.6 percent of the population. The annual "turnover" of books in these libraries in 1940 was only three million volumes, about seven and a half books per person per year. Thus the consumption even of "free" books was very low. At the same time, the usual commercial edition of literary works was about fifteen hundred.¹⁰ If this was the size of the market--very comparable to the vernacular print-markets in Europe in the eighteenth century¹¹--it is hard to believe that

"Malay" language books were likely to be much more profitable than Javanese: in both cases the market was tiny.¹² The argument is much stronger in the case of the press.¹³ But here the anomaly is that the ascendancy of "Malay" over Javanese (clear well before World War I and long before the Sumpah Pemuda [Oath of Youth]) was certainly largely due to the fact that a key element in this market--both as producers and as consumers--was the Chinese-less *peranakan* (Indonesian-born) Chinese community in the larger towns and cities.¹⁴

Another important line of argument stresses the rise of Indonesian nationalism and goes somewhat like this: The first generation of modern Indonesian nationalists were determined not to let themselves be "divided and ruled" any longer and therefore very early saw the need for a "national language" which was also not the colonial language. *Bahasa Melayu* was a centuries-old interisland lingua franca ideally suited to this purpose. Indonesian nationalists of Javanese origin, aside from recognizing the "difficulty" of Javanese, were far-sighted and generous enough not to press their native language's claims on Indonesia's other ethnolinguistic groups. Hence the Sumpah Pemuda. There is some truth in this, but what it ignores is the fact that the Sumpah was actually not the start of a new era but rather the logical culmination of at least three decades of linguistic transformation, whereby even in Javanese-speaking areas Javanese steadily lost ground to *bahasa Melayu* in the worlds of commerce, politics, and literature. Indeed it was only *because* of this long transformation that anyone was in a position by 1928 to swear the Sumpah with a calm *sembah*. In other words, it was less nationalism that created a common language than that a common language helped create nationalism. And, in any case, this argument does not really explain the rush of Javanese to write outside their own language *for their fellow-Javanese*.

I am inclined therefore to seek an explanation *internal* to Javanese society and culture, arguing that Javanese writers have turned to *bahasa Indonesia* partly, no doubt, to reach non-Javanese readers but more deeply as a way of, shall we say, wrestling with the power of Javanese. I would propose the paradox that it has been precisely the "weight" of Javanese tradition and traditional culture, and its menacing socio-cultural implications, that have sent gifted Javanese writers into what is, from one point of view, a sort of "internal exile." In this sense, the whole literary and para-literary tradition with which the body of this paper deals can be thought of as *karya pulau Buru*, a "product of Buru."

The backdrop to my argument is a double crisis in Javanese culture already clearly evident before "modern times." One of these crises the Javanese shared with other colonized peoples; the other strikes me as possibly *sui generis*.

The Politico-cultural Crisis

There was always a painful, even morbid, undertone to Sukarno's endless insistence on his Indonesia having endured 350 years of colonialism.

It was not merely almost as though he were claiming some "world record" (alas, in this regard Indonesia was easily outdistanced by the Philippines and Latin America, not to speak of East Timor). Sukarno, and surely a great many of his listeners, knew very well that, as stated, the claim was false. Many parts of Indonesia only experienced colonial rule in the twentieth century; many parts even of Java only seriously encountered colonialism in the eighteenth century. Yet it is possible to make sense of the proud pain in Sukarno's voice if we think of him not simply as a Javanese, or as an Indonesian, but as a Javanese *ruler*. For, in fact, beginning in the early seventeenth century, Javanese rulers had indeed experienced an almost unbroken series of defeats, humiliations, and catastrophes.¹⁵ By the end of the eighteenth century Pakubuwonos, Hamengkubuwonos, and Mangkunegoros had all become petty princelings "ruling" on Dutch sufferance and surviving economically on Dutch subsidies. Even the collapse of the VOC did them no good. Where the nationalists of 1945 were able to take good advantage of the collapse of the Japanese empire, the Javanese rulers of 1800 could do, and did, little to throw off the Dutch yoke. Diponegoro's insurrection itself was less an anti-Dutch affair than a Javanese civil war in which the Dutch supported the prince's enemies.¹⁶ After 1830, the only Javanese who clashed physically with the colonialists were small clusters of *haji*, strongmen, peasants, and other elements of the common people.¹⁷ The Javanese upper class became the pliant tool of the Dutch in erecting the ruthlessly exploitative Cultuurstelsel, in facilitating the depredations of private agrarian capitalism in the Liberal era, and so on till the close of the colonial age. From this perspective, Sukarno can be seen as the first Javanese ruler in almost 350 years to have some real independence.

But the fact that the Dutch ended up by co-opting the Javanese ruling class, rather than eliminating it as the British did in Burma, meant a particularly grave fossilization of the Javanese social system, in which ever greater pomp was displayed by the ruling class to conceal the reality of increasing impotence. To borrow a phrase from Breton De Nijs, the sunans and sultans had become *levende wayangpoppen* ("living wayang puppets") (we may recall the famous photo of Pakubuwono X looking like a bewildered young wife on the arm of a huge, fat, ugly Dutch Resident of Surakarta).¹⁸ The growing sense of impotence and impasse is evident in some of the court literature of that era. In his study of the extraordinary mid-century *Babad Ambon* (Chronicle of Ambon) Prof. Day demonstrates this very well.¹⁹ Written very much in the traditional heroic style, this chronicle nonetheless is an account of Pakubuwono VI's painful exile in Ambon. All the traditional tropes of regal magnificence are there in the poem, but they have a peculiar inverted quality, since they describe for the first time a lonely Javanese king longing for his palace and wives thousands of miles away--a king who has Dutch guards for his bungalow prison, not a huge royal retinue.

But surely the most telling expression of the impotence of the ruling class is the famous passage in Ronggowarsita's last poem, *Serat Kala Tida* (Poem of a Time of Darkness), composed shortly before his death in 1873:

Ratuné ratu utama
Patihé patih linuwih
Pra nayaka tyas raharja
Panekaré becik-becik
Parandéné tan dadi
Paliyasing kalabendu . . .

The King kingly perfection
The Chief Minister chiefly in truth
The *bupati* constant of heart
The lower officials excellent
Yet none can serve to stay
The time of doom . . . ²⁰

These lines are unimaginable in any earlier period of Javanese history. For they "mean" that even a perfect traditional monarchy was now incapable of fulfilling its ancient self-defined task precisely of preventing the *kalabendu*. As I once wrote, "The single terrible word *parandéné* (yet) expresses Ronggawarsita's desperate, and quite untraditional, sense that the old conception of the world was no longer valid, the cosmic rhythm had come unsprung, and Javanese 'power' was impotence."²¹ Nor was this sense of uselessness and stagnation confined to court circles. There is much fictional truth in Pramoedya's description of "Minke" and his teacher in a Hoogere Burgerschool classroom at the turn of the century:

[Tuan Lastendienst] bilang: di bidang ilmu Jepang juga mengalami kebangkitan. Kitisato telah menemukan kuman pes, Shiga menemukan kuman dysenteri--dan dengan demikian Jepang telah juga berjasa pada ummat manusia . . . Melihat aku mempunyai perhatian penuh dan membikin catatan Meneer Lastendienst bertanya padaku dengan nada mendakwa: Eh, Minke wakil bangsa Jawa dalam ruangan ini, apa sudah disumbangkan bangsamu pada ummat manusia? Bukan saja aku menggeragap mendapat pertanyaan dadakan itu, boleh jadi *seluruh dewa dalam kotak wayang ki dalang akan hilang semangat hanya untuk menjawab*. [Italics added]²²

[Mr. Lastendienst] said: "In the field of science Japan too has experienced a resurgence. Kitisato has discovered the plague microbe, Shiga the germ of dysentery--so the Japanese too have rendered service to mankind . . ."
Then, noticing that I was listening with the utmost attention and taking notes, Mr. Lastendienst asked me in an accusing tone: "Well, Minke, you represent the Javanese in this classroom--what have your people contributed to mankind?" It was not merely that I was utterly nonplussed by this sudden question: most likely the entire pantheon of gods in the dalang [puppeteer]'s wayang-chest would have despaired of making any answer.

The Literature and Language Crisis

If the politico-cultural crisis outlined above was one that ruling-class Javanese shared with co-opted ruling classes in many other parts of the colonial world--if Meneer Lastendienst's query could easily have been posed to representatives of many other people than the Javanese--the crisis of Javanese language and literature strikes me as a special one. To see why, we must turn to the peculiar character and history of the Javanese language and its literature and to print-capitalism's revolutionary impact on literary production from the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The crisis had, I think, three distinct causes which began to interact painfully in the nineteenth century.

The first was the profound break in the ancient literary tradition caused first by the fall of Majapahit and then by the smashing of Islamo-Javanese *pasisir* (littoral) civilization by two different kinds of barbarians: the VOC and that Genghiz Khan of Java, Sultan Agung.²³ One can think of the period from 1500 to 1750 as a kind of deepening Javanese Dark Ages, scarred by incessant wars, deportations, rapine, massacres, and famine.²⁴ How catastrophic the period of destruction was can be judged by the extent to which present-day knowledge of Old Javanese civilization depends on manuscripts found not on Java but on Bali and Lombok.²⁵ By the time that Javanese literary culture began to revive, in the later eighteenth century, a large part of Old Java's "Sanskritic" literature was either lost or had become nearly incomprehensible; it did not become accessible till the late nineteenth-century florescence of Dutch academic philology. In the meantime, a whole tradition of poetry-making among gentlemen-courtiers had essentially disappeared.²⁶

One of the most curious illustrations of this cultural break is the "death" of *wayang bèbèr*, an ancient type of *wayang* performed not with movable puppets but with elaborately painted scrolls.²⁷ The reason it died was that after the Dark Ages no one any longer knew how to perform it, shall we say, Majapahit-style?--that is, with the elaborate narrations and lyrical descriptions so touchingly depicted by Father Zoetmulder. Thus the only "conceivable" possibility was to play *wayang bèbèr* in *wayang purwa* style with movable puppets--the one *wayang* that survived, because it was rooted in popular-oral, not court-literary, culture. But for this performing style, the beautiful, still, painted scrolls of *wayang bèbèr* were completely unsuited. And so an old art-form died.

The break in the tradition--a sort of cultural amnesia--was not mitigated by the survival of an alternative linguistic link to the past (compare the role of Mediaeval Latin vis-à-vis Anglo-Saxon literature and English). In this sense, Javanese culture "lost" a mandarin court culture and literature analogous to what peoples such as the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese possessed up until modern times. While some manuscripts continued to be copied and studied, the old literature was largely inaccessible, physically and linguistically, to nineteenth-century Javanese.

The second "cause of crisis" was in some ways a consequence of the first. When Javanese literary culture began to revive in the eighteenth century,²⁸ it had lost its grip on the older, esoteric court language, and had, if you like, to recreate its "mystery," or "power," on an essentially vernacular base. In other words, the "elevation" of New Javanese court language and literature over ordinary speech had to be, and was, not the consequence of a cosmopolitan elite's familiarity with a foreign language and literature (Sanskrit), but of artificial, archaizing variations on a language that all Javanese more or less had in common. In this process nothing is more striking than the development of *krāma* and *krāma inggil*, the "high"-polite and "very high"-polite levels of Javanese speech, which, so far as we can tell, occurred after the end of the Dark Ages. It is, of course, likely that something of the sort would have occurred anyway, given the hierarchical structures of pre-modern Javanese society.²⁹ But there are good reasons for thinking that the extreme character of linguistic development in Java was above all a function of the increasing impotence and decadence of the Javanese upper class--and indirectly of Dutch colonial encouragement, in other words were a sort of compensation for a loss of real authority.³⁰ One can think of the immense, high walls around the *kraton* (palaces) in Solo and Jogja in the same light: these walls were absolutely no military protection against the Dutch but served as a sort of material *krāma*, separating, elevating, and mystifying the courts--high above Javanese society. We would not be wrong, therefore, to adopt in large measure the view of Brandes: "but scientific research . . . makes it clear . . . that, no matter how many traditional elements may be found in *krāma*, *krāma* is nonetheless, when one considers it closely, a pathological phenomenon, an excrescence on the actual stems of the Javanese language, frequently a considerable deformation, that *krāma* is only superficially attached to Javanese, that it is highly affected."³¹

For my argument, however, the key point is that colonial *krāma* was not a privileged literary language, like Old Javanese, but, more than anything else, an oral and social language. Thus it became much more deeply embedded in everyday Javanese life than Old Javanese ever was. Its spread and development owe everything to the long period (say 1680-1940) in which Dutch power simultaneously fossilized the Javanese ruling class and "feudalized" their relations with the rest of society. New heights of *hormat* (respect, deference, status) could be demanded because the ruling class had the alien and invincible Dutch behind them and depended less and less on the norms of Javanese society as a whole.³² The pseudofeudalism of colonial Javanese society thus deeply affected the language of Java, and oral communication was just as fossilized as other parts of the culture. This in turn meant that the great vernacularization movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in places as far apart as Finland and China, Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, were really out of the question.³³ In these societies the ruling classes either spoke and wrote in a foreign language--German, Swedish, Chinese--or at least (as in China) maintained a mandarin administrative language sharply distinct from the rest of society. The forces that came to be identified with popular nationalism and social reform could quite easily turn to a relatively uncontaminated "native language" or vernacular to

overthrow the cultural supremacy of the ruling class (all the easier, of course, when the ruling class's language could be branded as foreign). For Javanese such a liberating vernacularization movement was extremely difficult because the language of the ruling class, both oral and literary, *was* native, and because its power, with Dutch help, had penetrated so deep. Almost every Javanese knew, *had* to know, *krama* for survival.³⁴

It is likely that the energy put into "kramanizing" Javanese culture was heightened by the quarter from which some resistance came. The point is made nicely by Uhlenbeck when he writes that:

Despite the fact that it has played a major role in Javanese life for over four centuries, there is one field in which practically no ceremonial [i.e., *krama*] words occur at all, and that is the Moslem religion. This lacuna cannot be explained by the fact that this area makes heavy use of loanwords because--as is well known--loanwords as such are by no means excluded from the ceremonial opposition.³⁵

This insulation of the vocabulary of Islam from the pressures of kramanization certainly has a great deal to do with the internal values of Islam itself, which contain strong egalitarian elements.³⁶ Islam also has, in the Arabic-derived word *ummat* (community of believers), a self-conscious conception of horizontal solidarity.³⁷ But the essential point is that this linguistic insulation indicated clearly the stubborn refusal of an important part of Javanese society to be fully absorbed into the pseudofeudal social system; this sector remained a large, indigestible lump in the mouth of the dominant culture, which could neither swallow it nor spit it out. It is very instructive that the most violent Javanese literary polemics of the pre-1900 era, texts such as the *Serat Dermaganḍul*, the *Suluk Gaṭoloco*, and even the *Wulangrèh*, were aimed at "un-Javanese" Javanese Islam, *not* against the Dutch. (Indeed, to my limited knowledge, there is not a single pre-twentieth-century Javanese text fundamentally antagonistic to the Dutch!) In other words, *this* part of the crisis in Javanese society was perceived by Javanese literati as *internal* to that society, and this created a profound sense of anxiety and anger. (This anxiety and anger have by no means disappeared today.) Seen from another angle, the insulation of the Islamic vocabulary from kramanization meant that there was already in pre-modern times a linguistic foundation for a critique of the existing culture from within. Yet this foundation was both quite narrow and strongly identified with a social sector which tended, perhaps as a matter of survival, to be exclusive and inward-looking.

Before proceeding to the final element in the language and literature crisis--the impact of print-capitalism--it is necessary to make a few preliminary comments about *krama*. It is well known that the *krama* vocabulary is not very large, perhaps little more than a thousand words in all.³⁸ In this sense it is no match for *ngoko*, the "low"-familiar level of Javanese speech: there are no words in *krama* which lack a *ngoko* equivalent, while there are thousands of *ngoko* words which "stand on their

own"--already a sufficient indication of *krama*'s political origins. But there are three peculiarities about *krama* that deserve special attention. The first is that its vocabulary includes verbs as well as nouns and pronouns, that is, it covers not just the names of things but the motor relations between them. Secondly, *krama* words and their *ngoko* "equivalents" are in many cases different from a lexical point of view (thus one cannot derive the *ngoko*, *krama*, and *krama inggil* words for "horse"--*jaran*, *kapal*, and *turangga*--from one another). Thirdly, the use of, say, *jaran*, *kapal*, or *turangga*, has nothing to do with *what* is being said but indicates the relationship between speaker and interlocutor. *Aku arep mangan* and *kula badé neda* both "mean" "I'm going to eat," but the first can only be said between intimates and social near-equals or by a high-status person to someone lower down; the second can only be used to strangers or someone of higher status. The lexical estrangement of the two vocabularies, combined with the implications of dyadic hierarchy between speaker and interlocutor, produce the following: In English, which has long had its own linguistic hierarchies, one can say: "Please give me something to eat, sir"; "Please give me something to eat"; "Give me something to eat"; and "Give me something to eat, you idiot!" Throughout "give me something to eat" remains lexically stable. Minor adjustments allow for the expression of different relations between speaker and interlocutor. No such lexical stability exists in Javanese. A change in any one of the words in *aku arep mangan* requires changes in the others. To say *kula sampun mangan*, *aku wis neda*, *kula wis neda*, and so forth mean nothing.³⁹ They're just mistakes, or bad Javanese. They are neither insulting, grovelling, satirical, nor innovative. Simply embarrassing. In effect, *krama*'s socio-political implications are so powerful and deep that "play" between the levels is virtually ruled out.

Both the formal rigidity and the inherently dyadic, hierarchical implications of the *ngoko-krama* system were brought into question by the advent of print-capitalism, in ways that have a great deal to do, I think, with the appearance of the black hole. To get a sense of why, one has first to consider the social and cultural context in which Javanese literature was produced and disseminated prior to the print revolution. In the older culture, literature was still to a high degree an intimate, social art. While prose works existed and gradually became more common as time passed, poetry was the dominant literary mode. And although a certain amount of "private" reading went on, most literature was meant to be performed, face to face, among small groups of people. For this was a poetry that was always *sung*. The various "meters" in which poems were composed were much more indicators of the "melody" or "key" in which the poems were to be sung than disciplines exerted on the rhythms of ordinary speech. I have made the experiment of asking Javanese friends to *say* the words of Mangkunegoro IV's famous poem *Tripama*. In every instance they found it impossible. They would forget and have to remind themselves by starting to sing. (English-speakers might try to "say" the words of "God Save the Queen" or "Waltzing Matilda," Japanese-speakers those of "Kimigayo.") The intimacy of the milieu within which sung poems were performed meant that the dyadic core of New Javanese was not seriously violated. Whether *ingsun* (I) or

sira (you) was heard by the small group, each member would "hear" such pronouns as extensions of everyday dyadic speech. Finally, in a context where poetry and song were inseparable, and both were tied to music in a wider sense (as well as dance), it is not surprising that artists in these fields mingled easily, exchanged ideas, and often had equivalent ranks and emoluments calibrated within the *kraton* ranking-system (thus, Nyai Lurah Bedaya, Nyai Bèi Madusari, Radèn Tumenggung Warsodiningrat).

The coming of the printed book, followed much later by the arrival of the record and the cassette, changed all this dramatically. To the literary world, print-capitalism brought a sudden, enormous silence. Thousands of identical copies of an author's words were distributed through the market to thousands of private, separate, unknown readers. For the first time Javanese writers were confronted with an invisible, atomized public. Silent prose rather than sung poetry quickly became the norm. But the central problem for anyone writing now in Javanese was what one might call the "problem of pronouns." For it became more and more difficult to sustain the old pronominal forms in the world of the market. One can see this on both sides of the I-YOU divide. The old *ingsun*-I might be the singer, the composer, the sovereign praised, or a particular character in a poem's narrative, but the identity of this "I" was clear to everyone listening. In the silence of the market, however, who *was* *ingsun* (or *aku* or *kula*)? No one could be sure except as this "I" imposed himself through his own words, that is, personalized his voice and style, and, if successful, eventually imposed the persona of "I, Author X," whom most readers would never encounter except on the printed page. So with "you," for the market created a multiplicity of "yous"--aristocrats, busboys, hairdressers, officials, schoolgirls, and even Dutchmen. For this social multiplicity the Javanese language offers no obvious answer; there is really no word for a homogeneous, collective, public (thus equal-before-the author) "you," perhaps even no real second person plural. The print-market thus created speakers and interlocutors wholly outside the existing conventions of the language. What was the right "you" for all these collections of putative social superiors, equals, and inferiors? With the market came also the break-up of other old connections. Gifted authors became famous as authors; good singers dropped steadily in status till the coming of the cassette; good Javanese musicians rapidly lost caste; talented painters moved into the bourgeois market and vied with authors as figured personae. (It is perhaps not coincidental that *gamelan* appears rarely in modern prose literature, whereas the piano and violin are very visible.)

In turn, all of this was tied to the question of the *subject* of literature. For much of the old court literature had been concerned with the glories, especially the martial glories, of rulers, as well as the mysteries of religion. But after 1830, Javanese rulers never went to war again, and their putative glories were obviously hollow. The persuasiveness of the old-time religion was called into question as Islam assumed a more orthodox and iconoclastic character, as Christian missions made their inroads, and as the skepticism of European secular culture spread its ravages. What was one seriously to

write *about*? And for who? In what voice? From these questions arose this one: In what language?

The answer proved to be *bahasa Indonesia*. It turned out to be a God-send to Javanese writers, not so much because it offered an escape from a stagnant Javanese world but rather that it provided a *benteng* (fortress, citadel) from which to pursue a sort of Javanese cultural civil war. I would like to try to demonstrate this by sketching out a sort of "tradition"--naturally, with its byways as well as its thoroughfares--which, for convenience, I will define as stretching from Ronggawarsita to Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha.

I pick Ronggawarsita to begin with because he is nowadays, with some justification, regarded as the *pujangga pamutap* (last court poet)--a man who, though he was acquainted with Dutch and Eurasian Javanologists and at least bits of their work, was still fully a figure of the old Javanese court world. I pick him because only by bearing him in mind can one think usefully about the career of an able Javanese boy, Lesya, born in 1884, eleven years after the *pujangga*'s death, who later became famous as Prof. Dr. R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka (what a splendid mixture of titles!). I pick him, finally, because, as I have tried to show earlier in this paper, he was possibly the first writer to say something "impossible" in Javanese: *Ratuné ratu utama . . . Paradéné tan dadi paliyasing kalabendu*. This "impossibility" meant closing the book on a tradition of writing about *ratu utama* that went back centuries. For if the modern *ratu utama* could not stave off the *kalabendu*, why bother writing about him and his kind ever again? What could *utama* mean in such circumstances? Certainly nothing self-evidently embedded in the very nature of the world. Perhaps *utama* inside quotation marks? But the idea of putting anything in ironical quotation marks (how does one sing them?) was wholly foreign to Javanese tradition, implying as it does a reading culture and a subtle connivance between author and reader at the subject's expense.

Ronggawarsita's oxymoron is in fact a spontaneous expression of cultural pain. And is it a mistake to think that its harshness is accentuated by the contrast between the despair of the dying poet's words and the sensuous beauty of the sung *macapat* meter Sinom (Youth!)? I think not, since at least this sort of oxymoron has its nineteenth-century precedents. Compare this stanza of the *Suluk Gaṭoloco*, also composed in Sinom, which is quite typical of the poem's style:

Santri tiga duk miyarsa
Sareng misuh silitbabi
Ki Gaṭoloco angucap
Apa ta silité babi
Digawa kang darbèni
Nora gepuk raganingsun
Santri tiga angucap
Biyangamu silitbabi
Gaṭoloco mojar ilu ora
kaprah

On hearing this, the *santri* three
Abused him, shouting: "Pig's asshole!"
Said Gatoloco in response:
"Why speak you of a pig's asshole?
Its owner bears it, thus
On me it has no bearing!" Cried
The *santri* three in turn:
"Your mother is a pig's asshole!"
Said Gatoloco: "That is very odd
indeed. . . ."40

One might perhaps say that there is no *macapat* meter designed to express feelings of anger, hatred, or despair, and thus the author of this Suluk was "stuck" with Sinom. But did he have no conscious idea of the eerie opposition of sound and meaning in a stanza such as this?

Ronggawarsita is also important to the tradition I am inventing in that he was a self-conscious revivalist, making his own studies of Old Javanese literature, perhaps in a search for an ancient source of strength in a *jaman édan* (age of madness).⁴¹ But self-consciously reviving the old meant juxtaposing it with the present and thus distancing the old in a way that backhandedly foreshadowed the work of his great successor.

There can be little doubt that had he been born a century earlier, Poerbatjaraka would have become a notable *pujangga*: he had great linguistic gifts, enormous intellectual energy, a retentive memory, and a thorough knowledge of Javanese culture. But, being born in 1884 to a high official of the Sunanate, he attended the HIS (Dutch-Native School) attached to the *kraton*, learned Malay and Dutch, chatted regularly with the Sunan's Dutch bodyguards, and came to read a study of a classical Javanese text by Hendrik Kern.⁴² Exploiting what he found in Kern to confound his *kraton* seniors in literary matters, he got into political hot water. Increasingly dissatisfied with the ossification of *kraton* intellectual life, he began to pester certain Dutch officials to help him proceed with his studies of Old Javanese. In 1910, his ability and persistence won him an appointment in Batavia (at the age of twenty-six). His success there later brought him to Leiden, where he assisted Prof. Hazeu in the teaching of Javanese. In 1926, at the age of forty-two, he won his doctorate with a thesis entitled "Agastya in den Archipel."

The most interesting thing about this thesis, the first academic philological study of the Javanese past by a Javanese, is that it was written in Dutch. The choice of language was not principally imposed on him by Leiden. As early as 1914 he had begun publishing scholarly articles in Dutch, and a steady stream of Dutch-language publications followed throughout the colonial era. He only began to write in Indonesian and Javanese after Independence and in his old age. Was his choice of language a matter of audience--Dutch academics and antiquarian civil servants? No doubt, in part. But I am confident there was more to it than that. Poerbatjaraka was violently hostile to Ronggawarsita, whom he considered a pretentious fraud and an ignorant, superstitious dabbler in Old Javanese literature. By contrast,

he thought of himself as a professional and an enlightened twentieth-century man but also in some sense the true heir of Old Java. (Though he would make fun of various Dutch scholars, especially Prof. Berg, he was always, as I remember him, very grateful for and respectful of the philological education he had received. He was also contemptuous of much of the *kraton* sphere in which he had been brought up.)⁴³

I believe that for Poerbatjaraka the beauty of Dutch was its invulnerability to Javanese: in it one could say anything about Java and Javanese culture, no matter how sacred the subject. In a Dutch sentence "Sinuhun" ("Royal Majesty") was no more than a lexical specimen. In a Javanese sentence it was an obeisance. One can see this Dutch beauty in the title of one of his very first scholarly publications: "Een pseudo-Padjadjaransche kroniek" (A Pseudo-Pajajaran-ese Chronicle).⁴⁴ Notice how a putative *pusaka* is distanced and demystified by the mordant "pseudo-" in front of, and "-sche" behind the glory of Pajajaran. The violence of the disjuncture between Dutch language and indigenous subject allowed the scholar (and, he must have hoped, his Javanese readers) to keep a continuously critical stance vis-à-vis the received tradition. (Try to imagine "*Agastya wonten ing Nusantara*"!)

Nonetheless, Poerbatjaraka remains a byway to our tradition in that what he used against Javanese was Dutch. He did so because he came to maturity before the great wave of Indonesian nationalism got under way, which increasingly made Dutch a political pariah; and his life was devoted to scholarship, not politics, in an academic world where Dutch survived longer than almost anywhere else in Indonesia.

Yet the impulse at work in Poerbatjaraka's writing affected significant sections of Javanese society, and not only at the cultivated top. We may only note briefly here the fact that the Saminist movement, roughly contemporaneous with Poerbatjaraka's youth,⁴⁵ insisted on using only *ngoko* in addressing other Javanese, no matter how high their social or official positions. Unsurprisingly, nothing enraged Javanese *priyayi* more than this linguistic refusal (the Dutch, behind the wall of Dutch, were much less upset). Indeed, they reacted with physical violence to Saminist "impertinence."⁴⁶

The Saminists were, of course, a small group of lowly peasants in the remote interior of Java. But after 1910, there was growing controversy in the wider Javanese society over the whole *krama* issue. The first impulse for change took the form of hesitant, individual attempts to democratize "up." Dr. Soetomo recalled that his father, a *wedana* (district officer) in the Binnenlandsch Bestuur (Territorial Administrative Service) and thus a person of very high rank, insisted on speaking to "almost everyone" in *krama*.⁴⁷ According to his biographer, Soetomo followed suit, habitually using *krama* to his driver.⁴⁸ There was, however, much more organized social force behind a movement called Djawa Dipo (formed in 1918), which urged the abolition of *krama*, that is, a levelling "down."

Djawa Dipo's leading figure was a young Javanese of minor aristocratic origins called Radèn Tjokrosoedarmo, who as early as 1913 had been a top leader of the Sarekat Islam and its chief representative in Surabaya.⁴⁹ Zürcher gives a nice vignette of the young rebel and of the political implications of *ngoko* and *krama* in that era.⁵⁰ He records that when at one point Tjokrosoedarmo was summoned to court on some charge or other:

on entering the courtroom he immediately committed an offence. He remained standing before the Jaksa. The latter, a man of the old stamp, reminded Tjokro that according to adat a person brought before the court had to squat (silo). But the defendant refused on grounds of principle. The hearing thus opened according to the will of the defendant. But Tjokro Soedarmo went still further. When the first questions were directed to him, he answered. Not, however, in high-Javanese, Kromo, but in common Ngoko, the language in which superiors are pleased to address inferiors. At this point the Jaksa's astonishment reached its peak, and he asked the defendant if he did not know that he had to speak to him in Kromo. Soedarmo knew this perfectly well, but once again appealing to his principles, he declared that he would not speak in Kromo, a decision he based on the fact that in this venue the Jaksa's status was not that of a Javanese, but of a Government official. Accordingly, it was impossible for him to tender a form of respect that only had meaning for Javanese. To this the Jaksa found no reply, though he became extremely annoyed. He immediately summoned the opas and asked him: "If I ask you something, in what language do you answer me?" "In Kromo," replied mas opas. "Good," said the Jaksa, "then translate into Kromo what the defendant says to me in Ngoko."

Unlike the Saminists, Tjokrosoedarmo did not get slapped in the face for "impertinence." But the painful comedy of this vignette shows clearly the deep-rooted power of the colonial-feudal culture.

Early in 1918 Tjokrosoedarmo launched his Djawa Dipo movement at a meeting in Surabaya, which he addressed in *ngoko* to the following effect:⁵¹ now that the Creator has brought light to the slumbering Orient, it is no longer appropriate to continue living under intolerable conditions of irrelevant inequality. From the point of view of equality and to make things easier for foreigners, it is not only desirable but even necessary to jettison *krama*. *Ngoko* is the *bahasa asli* (original language; language of origin?), in which a Javanese thinks and in which he speaks to his children. *Ngoko* has to become the language of the "future reborn Javanese people."

Djawa Dipo soon won the official support of the leadership of the Sarekat Islam and its newspaper *Oetoesan Hindia*. Members of the movement committed themselves to speak always in *ngoko* (it was recommended, but not insisted upon, that they have others speak to them in *ngoko*, too). Logically enough, it was thought necessary to democratize the Javanese system of titles: henceforth all males were to be addressed as Wiro, married women as Wara, and unmarried girls as Rara. Thus H. O. S. Tjokroaminoto and his wife appeared for a time in the pages of *Oetoesan Hindia* as Wiro and Wara Tjokroaminoto.⁵²

Unsurprisingly, the movement met with abusive opposition from much of Javanese officialdom, which found in this instance an unlikely but vociferous champion in Dr. Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo.⁵³ Although a Javanese commentator friendly to the movement pointed out the complete absence of *krama* among the Tenggerese of East Java (often regarded as the most faithful repositories of ancient Javanese culture), and its rarity in certain very old Javanese villages in East Priangan--not to mention the fact that the great *wayang* hero Bima speaks *ngoko* even to Sang Hyang Jagadnata, ruler of the cosmos⁵⁴--officialdom insisted publicly that the abolition of *krama* would mean the "destruction of literature [*sic*],"⁵⁵ for *krama* was the language of literature and *ngoko* was generally unsuited for it.⁵⁶ Less publicly, "Kings, Princes, Regents, Jakas, Demangs, Wedonos, etc., all fear the future undermining of their power *which depends so much on the two languages and the 'hormat.'*"⁵⁷ Zürcher concluded his analysis on an optimistic note: "The fact is that all this hormat and kromo comes from another age when the little man crouched in the dust before the nobility and gave them hormat. But these times are long past. The Javan has awakened, he has become a human being [*mensch geworden*], and this consciousness is likely not to be consonant with continued respect for the slavish tradition of strict hormat. But traditions die slowly and change will come slowly, led by men who no longer know the words 'tida brani [I don't dare].'"⁵⁸

In fact, within a few years Djawa Dipo was dead, though some of its spirit continued to live in the early PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia), which, nonetheless, often adopted the Poerbatjarakan device of resorting to Dutch, rather than insisting on *ngoko*, to create an atmosphere of equality.⁵⁹ And we are all aware that *krama* is very much alive and well today, more than sixty years after Tjokrosoedarmo's spirited address. The reasons for Djawa Dipo's failure surely lie in the continuing power of Java's pseudofeudal culture. Yet I believe that a much more sustained assault would have come had the language choices remained Javanese or Dutch. It was the successful spread of Indonesian that unexpectedly produced a third option, a language as "democratic" as *ngoko*, and as non-Javanese as Dutch, but still with the inestimable advantage of being capable of becoming a national language. It seems to me that many of the impulses behind Djawa Dipo simply transferred themselves to the movement for the propagation of *bahasa Indonesia*. (I vividly remember from the 1960s the rage of a senior Javanese bureaucrat when one of his younger Javanese subordinates had the Tjokrosoedarmian

insolence to respond to a question asked in ngoko in the "new *ngoko*" of *bahasa Indonesia*--straight back!)

The year before Poerbatjaraka received his doctorate at Leiden, a baby was born in Blora who would grow up to be Indonesia's--or should I say Indonesian's?--greatest writer. Like Poerbatjaraka, though in a very different style, Pramoedya Ananta Toer was, and is, a rebel against the Javanese culture he imbibed as a child and young man. So far as I know, he has never published a page in the language of his childhood home; but this does not mean that Java and its culture are ever very far from his mind. I would argue in fact that, like Poerbatjaraka's Dutch, Pramoedya's *bahasa Indonesia* is a cultural *benteng* from which to cross swords with his heritage.

It may be useful to begin our discussion of Pramoedya with two exemplary passages from the marvellous story *Machluk Dibelakang Rumah* (Creatures Behind Houses), which is concerned with the *babu* (maids) who do the dirty work behind the houses of arriviste Javanese come to town in Jakarta after independence:

Barangkali patut pula kutjeritakan, bahwa rumahku tergolong pada petak jang terdiri atas duapuluhtiga pintu--duapuluhtiga keluarga! Dapat dikatakan semua petak mempunjai babunja masing-masing. Dan para prijaji dari udik ini tak djarang datang kekota ini setelah lebih dulu mendjadi babu atau djongos. Didaerah petak ini! Untuk mengabdi! Sedjalan dengan adjaran paraprijaji tua didjaman baheula: Berendah-rendah akan luhur achirnja. Djuga prijaji-prijaji udik jang datang ke Djakarta ini dahulu mengabdi. Pengabdiannja memang membawanja keharkat jang lebih tinggi: djadi prijaji dikota. Tetapi kadang-kadang mereka lupa pada pengabdiannja dulu. Karena itu sering terdengar teriakan histeris didaerahku ini:

Sekali lagi, gua seterika perut luh!

[Of the fate of the *babu*] Djiwanja mengembara kemana-mana sewaktu tubuhnja mentjutji, berdjalan, atau makan, atau tidur. Dapat dipastikan tiap minggu sekali ia kena bentjana: terpeleset disumur, paku terbenam dalam kakinja, terseterika lengan, terbalik menumpuk bangku, bahkan sekali waktu sedang beristirahat disebuah kursi rotan jang telah peot, ia kedjatuhan sepeda, kursi mendjatuhi deretan piring, dan setelah itu ia kedjatuhan pulung diatas kepalanja dari djuragan.⁶⁰

Perhaps I should also say that my home was located in a single row of partitioned dwellings--23 frontdoors. . . . 23 families! One could say that every such row

had its own maids. And these priyayi from the sticks quite often had come to the city after previous service as maids or houseboys. In this neighborhood of partitioned-dwellings! To serve! In full accord with the teachings of the old priyayi in times gone by: bow down now, and you'll rise high in the end. Yes, these priyayi who had come to Jakarta from the sticks had previously been in service. And their service had indeed raised them to a higher status: that of city priyayi. But sometimes they forgot their previous service. And so in my neighborhood one often heard this hysterical shriek:

Next time, I'll put the iron to your belly!

Her spirit would rove far and wide while her body laundered, ironed, walked, or ate, or slept. You could be sure that once every week some disaster would strike: she'd slip and fall by the well, she'd get a nail in the sole of her foot, she'd burn her arm with the iron, or she'd stumble headlong over a bench . . . in fact once, while she was resting in a dilapidated rattan chair, a bicycle fell over on her, the chair sent a row of dishes crashing, and in due course a *pulung* from her master landed on her head.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the grief and anger in these passages, but we are a long way from the *Suluk Gatoloco*'s *silitbabi* or Ronggawarsita's *parandéné*. The first passage is perfectly intelligible to any reasonably educated Indonesian reader. It appears to be a satire on upstart *nouveaux riches* and "new" civil servants who, forgetting their humble pasts as *babu* (maids) and *jongos* (houseboys)⁶¹ to the former colonial rulers, are brutal to their own servants. But the full vengeance of the author will only be felt by *Javanese* readers (though the word *Jawa* is never mentioned in the story). For the term *priyayi* epitomizes the nineteenth century pseudofeudal ideal of the refined, cultivated, leisured, upper-class Javanese.⁶² Thus *prijaji dari udik* ("from the sticks") is just as "impossible" as Ronggawarsita's helplessly perfect king, but now the oxymoron is utterly self-aware and venomous (still more "impossible"--*priyayi* who used to be *babu* and *jongos*!) Notice also the subtle Javanism of *paraprijaji*; the parodic Indonesianization of a standard Javanese motto in "*berendah-rendah akan luhur akhirnja*";⁶³ the sardonic use of the Jakarta-Sundanese "*baheula*" for the normal *dulu* or *lama*; and finally the brutality, next to all of this, of "Next time, I'll put the iron to your belly!" in *bahasa Jakarta*. The whole force of the passage comes from the sophisticated play between different languages within the medium of Indonesian. It is absolutely untranslatable into Javanese! Yet it depends no less absolutely on the existence of Javanese, and a readership of Javanese.

I would guess that most of Pramoedya's non-Javanese readers will miss the point of the second passage, even though in some editions the

words *kedjatuhan pulung* are italicized, and in others *kedjatuhan* is replaced by the explicitly Javanese *ketiban*. Since *pulung* in Indonesian means "pellet," they may even frown in puzzlement. But every Javanese reader will see at once that Pramoedya is quoting the classical Javanese *topos* describing the mysterious ball of radiance that descends on the head of the man destined to be the new king: such a hero is thus said to be *ketiban pulung*.⁶⁴ The lash flails in all directions: a bicycle equals a *pulung*, and a *babu* replaces a heroic future-king. One can use the *same words* for the rise of a new dynasty and the brutal mistreatment of a household servant. I would emphasize again that the sentence depends for its encapsulating, "quoting" effect on its being written in Indonesian; only in non-Javanese can one speak to Javanese this way out of the side of one's mouth. And how Javanese in its own way all this is! One can almost see the smile on the writer's face as one foot flies back to kick Javanese traditional culture in the teeth.

Another famous passage is the opening of the mordant tale *Djongos + Babu* (Houseboy + Housemaid) (*not Djongos dan Babu*, and *not* translatable easily into Javanese). It goes like this:

Sedjak Jan Pietersz. Coen turun-temurun keluarga itu memang berdarah hamba. Hamba jang tak tanggung-tanggung--setia sampai bulu-bulunja. Mungkin djuga bukan sedjak Coen sadja. Besar kemungkinan sudah sedjak Pieter Both atau disaat-saat Houtman mengelana disemua samudera. Orang tak ada jang tahu dengan pasti. Jang sudah njata, keluarga itu dikenal dikala Coen belum djadi artja jang diusir Djepang dari depan gedung Financiën.

Keluarga pertama ini dikenal karena tertjatat dibuku besar dengan huruf latin, inlandsch sergeant . . . stb. no. . . . Pangkat sersan waktu itu sangat tinggi. Dengan pangkat itu orang bisa berbiak. Dan keluarga itu menurunkan empatpuluh anak. Entah berapa biangnja. Orang tak ada jang tahu. Soal ini tak boleh masuk buku besar.

Turunan kedua--hamba djuga, serdadu tak berkelas! Kemudian dari turunan keturunan, derdjat hambanja turun djuga. Kian ketjil kian ketjil. Achirnja sampai tahun 1949 sampailah keluarga itu pada Sobi dan Inah--titik derdjat hamba jang penghabisan. Setahun jang lalu mereka masih hamba-hamba negeri. Keduanja tak tahu: Bahaja mengawang diatas kepala. Derdjat hambanja akan turun satu derdjat lagi--hamba-hamba distrik-federal-Batavia! Sobi djongos, Inah babu.

Sekiranja Tuhan masih bermurahhati seperti didjaman dulu, sudi memandjangkan keturunan hamba itu, pasti keturunan jang ketigapuluh bukan manusia lagi, tapi--tjatjing jang mendjulurdjulur didalam tanah. . . .⁶⁵

From the days of Jan Pietersz. Coen, generation after generation, the family had always had true servile blood. Servile to the nth degree--faithful from top to toe. Maybe not merely since the days of Coen. There's a good chance as far back as the time of Pieter Both, or when Houtman sailed the seven seas. No one knows for sure. What's certain is that the family was already known at a time when Coen had not yet become the statue kicked out by the Japanese from in front of the Financiën Building.

The original family is known because it was recorded in a big book with Latin letters. . . . Native Sergeant. . . . Gazette No. . . . In those days the rank of sergeant was a very high one. With such a rank, a man could breed abundantly. And the lineage produced forty children in that generation. Who knows from how many dams. No one has any idea. Such things were not permitted to be recorded in the big book.

The second generation--servant once again: soldier, without rank!

Then, from generation to generation, their servile status sank down and down. Lower and lower. Until, in 1949, the family line descended to Sobi and Inah--the ultimate in servanthood. A year before they had still been servants of their own country. Neither had any idea of the peril looming over their heads: that their servanthood would sink down one further step. They would become servants of the Federalist Municipality of Batavia! Sobi as houseboy, Inah as housemaid.

If only God were as merciful as in olden times, and were prepared to prolong this servile lineage, unquestionably the thirtieth generation would no longer be human beings, but rather maggots squirming in the earth. . . .

Much of the force of this splendid tirade comes from the fact that it is written in Indonesian, can't be written in Javanese, but can only fully be *dirasain* (experienced painfully) by Javanese readers. For it is a sardonic parody (*karikatur*!) of the classical *babad*, with their elaborate genealogies of famous heroes. Here is a *silsilah* (family tree) of servants, who "if only God were as merciful as in olden times," would be permitted to decline (notice the play on *turun* [descend] and *turnan* [descendant]) eventually from being human beings to being maggots. Here is a comic version of classical dating-systems, now marked, not by great Javanese dynasts, but by various Dutch adventurers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries--the era of Panembahan Senapati and Sultan Agung! (And the typical allusiveness of classical references to period is marvelously parodied in my favorite Pramoedya sentence: "at a time when Coen had not yet become the statue kicked out by the Japanese from in front of the gedung Financiën"--at

each turn of phrase one is promised a "date," but at the next that promise is undermined).⁶⁶ The classical polyphiloprogenitiveness of great Javanese rulers is satirized in the figure of the "founding father" sergeant who likewise can *berbiak*, with who knows how many *bijang* (words of the coarsest animal-like overtones: we may recall the three *santris*' *biyangamu silitbabi*). Notice also the special typographical features of the passage: "Pietersz." and "stb. no." are Dutch, and *huruf latin*, conventions, which not only make their own mocking point, but can't be intelligibly rendered in the ancestral script.

For another style in which Pramoedya uses Indonesian against Javanese, let us turn to the famous tale *Dendam* (Revenge).⁶⁷ It will be recalled that the setting of this story is the Revolusi, and its central drama is the arrest, interrogation, torture, and eventual death of a *haji* who appears to be a spy for the Dutch. The strange power of the tale, and its almost unbearable suspense, come from the fact that until the last moment the *haji* is *kebal* (invulnerable) to the tortures inflicted on him and continues to smile "*presis seperti gadis mendapat mimpi bagus*" ("exactly like a girl who has had a beautiful dream").⁶⁸ Tied to an electricity-pole, he is stabbed in the belly with a *bambu runcing* (a bamboo pole sharpened at one end to make a spear):

Udjung tombaknja mendedjap hilang, menjelinap kedalam
perut hadji itu. . . . Bambu itu ditarik tjepat. . . .
Udjung bambu itu meliuk sedikit dan tetap kering. . . .
Kunantikan isi perutnja keluar. Tak keluar. Ia tetap
tersenjum sabar. Dan ia tak luka. . . .

The tip of the spear flashed and disappeared, slipping
into the *haji*'s belly. . . . The bamboo was quickly
pulled out. . . . The tip was slightly bent and still
quite dry. . . . I waited for his guts to gush out.
But they didn't. He continued to smile patiently.
And he was not wounded at all. . . .

Shortly afterwards the *haji* is stabbed in the eye:

Aku lihat udjung tombak bambu masuk kedalam matanja dan
lari pula dengan tiada meninggalkan bekas.

I saw the tip of a bamboo spear pierce his eye and flee
without leaving a trace.

Then suddenly:

Aku melihat senjum hadji itu tiba-tiba hilang. Kedua tangannja jang terikat kebelakang bergerak-gerak. Dan tali pengikat, jang telah rantas-rantas kena samurai, putus. Orang-orang jang mabok itu tiba-tiba djadi insaf akan keselamatannja. Ketjemasan tergambar pada muka mereka. Pelan-pelan orang mundur kebelakang. Kedua tangan kurban itu telah bebas.⁶⁹

I saw the *haji*'s smile suddenly vanish. The two hands tied behind his back stirred. And the rope that bound him, which had been half cut through in places by the samurai-sword, broke apart. The intoxicated suddenly took thought for their own safety. On their faces fear was etched. Slowly people edged backward. The victim's two hands now were free.

But the *haji*'s feet are attached by a rope to the back of a truck, and someone yells for the truck to start up. The *haji* is yanked off his feet and dragged along behind the accelerating truck--"*ia masih nampak tenang djua. Dan ia belum lagi mendapat luka berat oleh asahan batu dan aspal djalan raja* [Yet he still appeared completely calm. And he still had suffered no serious injury from the scraping of stones and asphalt of the highway.]."⁷⁰ His invulnerability is only destroyed when a soldier with a particular samurai sword stabs him, crying out the strange words "*Kembali djadi tanah!*" ("Become earth once more!")⁷¹ Once this *mantra* (magic spell) is uttered the *haji* dies immediately.

There is nothing in this tale to suggest that either the *haji* or the mob of would-be torturers and executioners are Javanese. The presumable locale is Cikampek, in northern West Java, which was an important railway junction, supply depot, and military base for the Republican forces facing the Dutch in Batavia; and when the soldiers speak, they use a stylized form of the Jakarta dialect. Nonetheless, the story is incomprehensible unless one bears in mind a series of famous tableaux from traditional Javanese culture: Bhisma, riddled with wounds, lying on a bed of up-pointing arrows; Abimanyu's shredded flesh in a howling circle of Kurawa enemies; Suyudana in his final proud, despairing battle with Bima;⁷² Niwatakawaca, who can not be killed even by the gods till he is tricked by Supraba's soft voice into revealing the secret of his invulnerability; above all, perhaps, the well-loved scenes where Arjuna is mobbed by *raseksa* or *buta* (giants), especially the fang-toothed Buta Cakil: he stands quite still, apparently defenseless, a calm smile on his face. His shrieking enemies attempt to stab, slash, and maim him, but the smooth film of his invulnerability foils their every effort. Finally, the hero "loses his smile" and goes on the attack--at which point the mob "*tiba-tiba djadi insaf akan keselamatannja.*"

Non-Javanese readers can take *Dendam* pretty much on its obvious terms as describing a grim episode in the Revolusi. Javanese readers, however, will feel the peculiar linguistic violence of the veiled allusions and ironic parallels: soldiers of the Republic/mob of *buta*; *haji* (of course, it had to be a *haji*)-spy/Arjuna. Yet for such Javanese readers the violence of the tale comes precisely from its being written in Indonesian, not Javanese. If translated into Javanese, it becomes embedded in a Javanese world in which *kebal haji* are not at all foreign, and can readily be assimilated to the genre of Javanese-style *cerita silat* (penny dreadfuls). It is only the matter-of-fact *alienness* of Indonesian that allows Pramoedya to exploit the abyss between two worlds and languages and to "quote" Javanese culture rather than speak from within it.

Before leaving Pramoedya, it may be worth touching on one more important element in the odd relationship between Indonesian and Javanese--what one can think of as "the weight of words," or the link between language and reality. Both the felt antiquity and the hierarchical rigidities of Javanese make it a language tied tightly to the immediacy of intimate experience and the very nature of the world. Conversely, the modernity of *bahasa Indonesia* and its astonishing absorptive capacities distance it from immediate experience and loosen it from the grip of the world. *Dendam* offers some illustrations of this point. What strikes me as the one flaw in the tale (though one sees why Pramoedya made the decision he did) is that the *mantra* which dissolves the *haji*'s invulnerability is in *bahasa Indonesia*. I hope I am not far wrong in thinking that Indonesian *mantra* can not really *be mantra*, for the conception behind a *mantra* is that certain words, in certain prescribed orders, have active "power" in the world--beyond their evident semantic thrust lie secret and dangerous "meanings." This sense of the "power" of words seems to be utterly foreign to Indonesian, whose charm for us, and its speakers, is that nothing in it is secret or dangerous, for the language slips lightly along the world. The bite of sacrilege is remote from this language, which has so few sacred cows of its own.

The solemn rigidity of Javanese, in its later life at least, which makes *aku sampun mangan* meaningless, can be contrasted with all the subtle possibilities of authorial play that Indonesian affords. (For example, each of the following has its own connotations: *saya sudah makan*, *aku sudah makan*, *saya sih sudah mangan*, *gua udah makan*, and so on. Almost all the terms are interchangeable in a way that Javanese virtually excludes.) Among the subtle glories of Pramoedya's prose are his inventions of new words, adaptations of old words, distortions of old meanings, and such things as the heightening-by-distance effect achieved by putting Indonesian words into the mouths of his utterly Javanese peasants. He is always keenly aware that Indonesian is a language that by its very freedom and inventiveness pulls into the future rather than reverberates with the past. Here are some reflections of the anonymous "I" of *Dendam*:

Aku berangkat kesetasiun dengan uniform pradjurit. . . .
Dan aku bangga pada uniform-hidjauku buatan pendjara
Tjipinang itu. Akupun bangga pada pangkatku: pradjurit
belum berkelas dan berpangkat. . . . [73] Karena itu
akupun pergi kesetasiun. Mengapa 'kan tidak? Selalu
dan selalu manusia suka memperlihatkan kelebihannja.
Apalagi kalau kenjataan jang telandjang itu diberi
fantasi sedikit: aku pemuda revolusioner. . . . Dan
bila hati ini mulut pasti akan terdengar teriak fantasi
itu: "Lihatlah--aku djuga seorang patriot."⁷⁴

I left for the station in my soldier's uniform. . . .
And I was proud of my green uniform made in Cipinang
Prison. I was also proud of my rank: private, without
stripes or rank. . . . And so I went to the station . . .
and why not? Forever and always men love to show off
their superiority. Specially if the reality is dressed
up in a bit of fantasy: I am a revolutionary pemuda.
. . . And if this heart were lips, without question
this fantasy could be heard shouting: "Look! I'm a
patriot too!"

"Patriot," "*pemuda revolusioner*" (revolutionary youth)--these fantasies
are also linguistic inventions. In this sense, they are the exact
opposite of *mantra*: not syllables resonating with the secrets of the
alam (nature, the universe) but rather words which, like the words of a
gifted, marketed author, draw on themselves for what power they can
exert. They are what Pramoedya in so many of his stories calls *istilah*,
human inventions in historical time and circumstances, that, by their
very novelty and unanchoredness in the world, draw men and women into
action through the imagination. One might say, perhaps exaggerating,
that it was because so many youngsters had the *fantasi* that they were
or could be *pemuda revolusioner* and *patriot* that the Revolusi broke out
and had what success it did.

Half a century after Poerbatjaraka's Leiden doctorate, and Pramoedya's
birth, a novel was published in Jakarta which opened with the following
words:

Disebuah pagi yang merangsang, Arjuna bertolak
pinggang. Hatinya gundah dan penasaran. Semalam
papinya marah-marah karena melihat anaknya yang satu
itu berciuman dengan seorang perempuan didalam mobil
dinasnya.

"Anak tak tahu aturan! Siapa perempuan itu?"
hardjknya.

"Salah seorang pacar saya," jawab Arjuna dengan hati kesal karena merasa diusik urusan pribadinya.

"Salah seorang pacarmu? Salah seorang?!" Papinya mendelik. Tadi malam. Dan Arjuna bertambah tak senang pada sikap Papi itu.⁷⁵

One maddening morning Arjuna stood with his arms akimbo. He felt depressed and irritated. The previous evening his daddy had flown into a rage when he spotted that kid of his necking with a girl in *his* official limo.

"You little hooligan! Who is that girl?" he scolded.

"Oh, one of my sweethearts," answered Arjuna resentfully, feeling that his personal life was being meddled with.

"One of your sweethearts? One of . . . ?" Daddy's eyeballs bulged. Last night. And Arjuna got more and more fed up with Daddy's attitude.

This is the unmistakable voice of Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha (*né* Mulyana), in 1977 still in his early twenties (as Pramoedya had been when he began publishing in 1947): a voice of marvellously supple and nonchalant impudence. The key word of course is the fifth: for if we were to substitute Hassan, or Henk, or Sumardi for Arjuna, all the malice would disappear and we would have nothing but an ordinary scene between a boring, middle-aged Indonesian official and his childishly rebellious son. But by stealing Arjuna from the Javanese classics and plunging him into the casual bourgeois world of contemporary Jakarta, Yudhistira in his own way picks up from his ancestors and continues their civil war. The words in the paragraph are carefully chosen: *bertolak pinggang* (to have one's arms akimbo) is a thoroughly *kurangajar* (insolent) body posture which the Arjuna of *wayang* (henceforth Arjuna I) cannot properly assume. The last thing that Arjuna I's heart should be is "*gundah dan penasaran*." The splendor of "*salah seorang pacar saya*" lies in Arjuna II's and his father's *muka tembok* (deadpan) unawareness of what writer and all Javanese readers know only too well: that Arjuna I was celebrated and admired for his countless sexual partners.

The rest of the novel proceeds along essentially the same lines: a series of rather chaste love-affairs between Arjuna II, his friends and rivals (Kreshna, that is, Kreshna II, Abimanyu II, and Palgunadi II), and their schoolmates Setyowati II, Arimbi II, and Anggraeni II, punctuated with quarrels with their parents and other older relatives.⁷⁶ The malicious exploitation of *wayang* names is done in two different ways. First, these sacred names are, on the telephone and in casual conversations, impudently abbreviated to "Ar," "Kresh," and "Set." Secondly, though superficially selected at random, the names are in fact organized in such a way as to show (Javanese) *wayang*-lovers that no mistakes of the *aku sampun mangani* type are being made. Everything is "wrong," but in a calculated manner. For example, there is only a small number of *wayang*-women with whom Arjuna I is *not* sexually involved, but *all* Arjuna II's girls fall into this category. "Bad" Kurawa names rarely occur, and when

they do, they mainly denote exemplary or at least neutral characters (see below p. 42). And Yudhistira is careful to give the name Palgunadi (II) to Arjuna II's rival in love (whom he cheats shamefully) because this parallels the relations between Arjuna I and Palgunadi I--though the *lakon* (*wayang* "play") Palgunadi is not among the most popular or best known. (Thus *wayang*-loving readers will know that Yudhistira knows his *wayang* very well.)

Throughout, the brio of the novel comes from the doubleness of the writing, in which Yudhistira pokes his readers in the ribs, while the characters go their bourgeois way completely oblivious of the overtones of what they say. A nice example is the following exchange: when Burisrawa II, the father of Arimbi II, finds that Arjuna II has escorted her home, though he has strictly forbidden her to see the young playboy, he draws a pistol and threatens to shoot the lad:

"Kalau tembakan Oom barusan menghancurkan kepala saya, pasti Oom pun akan menghancurkan kepala sendiri setelah Oom tahu siapa saya!" begitu kata Arjuna.

Mendengar itu, si Oom mengerutkan kening.

"Memangnya, kamu siapa?" suara si Oom mengandung semacam sesal dan kecemasan.

"Saya Arjuna. Pacar Arimbi!" sahut Arjuna sambil meneruskan langkahnya dan menghilang dari rumah itu.⁷⁷

"Unc, if you shoot and blow my head off, you'll for sure be blowing your own head off too the minute you find out who I am!" Thus Arjuna.

On hearing this, 'Unc' knitted his brows.

"Well, who are you, anyway?" In Unc's voice there were now traces of a certain regret and alarm.

"I'm Arjuna. Arimbi's sweetheart!" replied Arjuna, continuing on his way and vanishing out through the front door.

Here the doubleness comes from the contrast between Burisrawa II's Indonesian worry that this insolent boy's father may be someone important and powerful in the Jakarta elite and all those *wayang* scenes where a *buta* or someone from Sabrang (overseas) encounters the great Arjuna I and ignorantly demands to know who he is.

The novel's conclusion complicates the sardonic play of allusion further. Arjuna II has been violently abused by his father for kissing the latter's secretary, Pergiwati II.⁷⁸ Now he finds his father himself in Pergiwati II's arms:

Kemarahannya kian memuncak ketika ternyata kedua orang yang melengkak jadi satu bagai keong racun di hadapannya

itu tidak juga menyadari kehadirannya. Sehingga, dengan geram ia lalu menendang pintu dibelakangnya sampai menimbulkan ledakan keras.

Kedua orang itu terlonjak, dan seketika mereka melepaskan pelukan masing-masing dan menghadap ke pintu. Dan ketika mereka melihat Arjuna yang tampannya sudah tidak mirip Arjuna lagi, melainkan mirip raksasa itu, mereka tambah kaget, sehingga mata mereka terbuka lebar-lebar dan mulut mereka ternganga-nganga.

Sementara itu, dengan geram Arjuna lantas mengambil anak panah dan busurnya. Memasangnyanya dan membidikkannya ke dada Papinya yang terkutuk itu. Anak panah melesat dan tepat menembus jantung. Crap!

Tapi panah dan busur itu hanya ada di dalam angan-angan Arjuna saja, sehingga Papinya dan Pergiwati yang menyaksikan kelakuan Arjuna yang ganjil itu, mengerutkan kening masing-masing. Tapi Arjuna tak mau menghiraukan semua itu. Dengan suara keras, ia lalu berteriak. Menghardikkan makian yang pernah keluar dari mulut Papinya setelah ia mencium mulut Pergiwati di tempat itu juga.

"Kamu ini betul-betul kurang-ajar! Brengsek! Tidak tahu aturan! Setan! Kambing! Kuda! Sapi! Kerbau dan kawan-kawannya!!!" kutuknya. Arjuna lalu meludah.

Fuih!!⁷⁹

His fury continued to mount when it became obvious that the pair before him, glued together like poisonous snails, were still oblivious of his presence. At that, he angrily kicked the door behind him to, making a loud bang.

The couple leapt to their feet, abandoning their embraces, and swung round to face the door. And when they observed an Arjuna whose face no longer resembled Arjuna's, but rather that of a giant, they were even more astounded: their eyes bulged and their mouths gaped.

Meanwhile, Arjuna furiously picked up his bow and arrow, fitted the arrow, and aimed it at the breast of his damned daddy. The arrow flew off and pierced straight through Daddy's heart. Crap!

But arrow and bow existed only in Arjuna's imagination--so that his Daddy and Pergiwati, watching his weird behavior, simply frowned in puzzlement. But Arjuna refused to heed any of this. He started shouting at the top of his voice. Bellowing out the curses that had earlier exploded from Daddy's mouth when he'd caught Arjuna kissing Pergiwati's lips in this very same room.

"You hooligan! Louse! Lout! Devil! Goat! Ox!
Water-buffalo! etc. etc.!!!" he cursed. Then Arjuna spat.
Fuih!!

For the first and last time in the novel, Yudhistira, for malicious fun, makes Arjuna II seem aware of his namesake.⁸⁰ We are to imagine him going emptily through the motions of Arjuna I drawing his bow and letting fly his invincible arrow Pasopati. "Papi" and Pergiwati II have not the faintest idea what is going on. Neither Arjuna II, nor "Papi," nor Pergiwati II really thinks that Arjuna II's face now "looks like a giant's"; the phrase is inserted by the author simply to tease his *wayang*-loving Javanese readers, who will recognize at once a parody of the occasional terrible transformations of heroes like Kreshna I and Yudhistira I into colossal, fire-breathing, multiheaded giants (*tiwikrama*). Finally, Yudhistira has the fun of writing "Then Arjuna spat. Fuih!!!" in which the *fuih* certainly flies up off the page into some readers' faces. Note that the entire passage, not to speak of the book, *depends* for its effect on the invisible presence of Javanese alongside Indonesian, or rather its invisible encapsulation within it.

Yudhistira can only have been delighted when the authorities were goaded into banning a projected film based on *Arjuna Mencari Cinta*--not because it satirized elite Jakarta life, but because it would "damage the *wayang* world."⁸¹ For, of course, there is nothing in the novel, except countless deadpan allusions, the final four paragraphs, and the names, that is *about wayang* at all. But it was precisely the insouciant *lèse-majesté* of the names that really angered an establishment still deeply sunk in the residues of colonial Javanese culture.

Yudhistira made fun of the ban in *Arjuna Drop Out*, the sequel to *Arjuna Mencari Cinta*, in the following dialogue between Arjuna and a former girlfriend, Jeng Sum (Sumbadra I was Arjuna I's main wife and greatest love), who is described as happily married to an absurdly honest bank clerk called Aswatama (II) and blessed with a young baby whom she has named Pancawala (II).⁸² Says Arjuna II:

"Siapa namanya?"

"Pancawala."

"Wah, seperti nama anak Prabu Yudhistira saja."

Jeng Sum tersenyum. "Memangnya Jeng Sum sering nonton wayang?" Jeng Sum cuma senyum. "Tapi hati-hati lho, jeng. Salah-salah anak itu nanti mendapat kesulitan karena namanya."

"Lho, namanya kenapa?"

"Memakai nama wayang itu dilarang. Dianggap menghancurkan kebudayaan."⁸³

"What's his name?"

"Pancawala."

"Wow! Just the same as Prabu Yudhistira's kid."
Jeng Sum smiles. "I guess you often watch wayang, huh?"
Jeng Sum merely smiles. "Well, be real careful now.
Otherwise the kid'll have a lot of trouble later on
because of his name."

"Really? How come?"

"Using wayang names is banned. It's supposed to
be 'destructive to culture.'"

Here again, the bile comes not so much from the obvious gibe at the film censors, but from every Javanese reader's awareness that the traditional reason for being "*hati-hati, lho*" is that *wayang* names are so "heavy" and "power-full" that small children, unless they come from the highest aristocratic circles (and not always then), do not have the "power" to bear them, and thus may "*nanti mendapat kesulitan*."⁸⁴

Let me conclude these quotations from Yudhistira's work with a passage from *Arjuna Drop Out* where the Javanese civil war is pursued from quite another rampart. Frustrated by life in Jakarta, Arjuna II takes the train to Jogja, where he arrives early in the morning:

Yogyakarta, sekarang ternyata telah banyak berubah. Tampak sedang mencoba bersolek, dengan gincu yang tak cocok, dengan bedak tanpa selera. Padahal jiwanya tetap saja jiwa yang dulu. Jiwa priyayi yang selalu hadir dengan ironi: blangkon di kepala, dasi di leher, keris di pinggang, samsonite di tangan. Selalu bicara tentang kejayaan Mataram, sambil memimpikan Amsterdam.

Arjuna menghirup udara, mencoba menikmati rasa Jawa. Rasa menjadi orang Jawa kembali setelah bercerai dengan induknya sekian lama. Setelah kebudayaan campurbaur kota Jakarta mengasemblingnya menjadi sebuah produk baru yang kosmopolit-universal--tanpa ciri kedaerahan sama sekali. Bahkan hampir tanpa tulang punggung. Apa artinya itu, kurang jelas.

Becak melewati tugu perempatan yang sangat terkenal dan menjadi ciri kota itu, di samping Jalan Malioboro. Tapi tugu itu kini, di tengah perubahan yang terjadi, betul-betul menjadi hanya fosil.^[85]
Tata-kota yang ngawur membuatnya menjadi amat lucu.⁸⁶

These days, Jogja's obviously changed a lot. Blatantly trying to be stylish, with the wrong color lipstick, and vulgar face powder. In spirit, however, the same as always. The priyayi soul always ironically present: *blangkon* on the head, tie at the neck, kris at the waist, and samsonite briefcase in hand. Always talking about the glory of Mataram, while dreaming of Amsterdam.

Arjuna breathes in the air, trying to enjoy the feeling of Java. The feeling of becoming Javanese once again, after so long a separation from his roots. After the jumbled culture of Jakarta has assembled him into a new, cosmopolitan-universal product--without the slight trace of provincial character. In fact, virtually without backbone. Meaning what? Not too clear.

The *becak* fly past the famous obelisk at the intersection--the city's trade-mark, along with Malioboro Boulevard. But these days, in the midst of all the changes taking place, the obelisk is really merely a fossil. The senseless ordering of the city has turned it into something ludicrous.

The ferocity of this passage has, I think, few equals in modern Indonesian literature. No doubt, some of this ferocity is apparent to any reader of Indonesian, but its full bite is only felt by the Javanese reader caught between Arjuna II and his creator. For example, many non-Javanese readers may take "*dengan gincu yang tak cocok, dengan bedak tanpa selera*" Indonesian-style, as evoking images of prostitutes, coarse *bakul*, or nouveau riche, vulgarian women, and they will not be wrong. But Javanese (especially Jogja Javanese) will know that it was (perhaps still is) common for Jogjanese male aristocrats to use *gincu* and *bedak* to heighten their *halus* (refined) prettiness. And the malice of the pairings of Javanese *blangkon* with Indonesian *dasi*, Javanese *keris* with Americo-Indonesian *samsonite* (briefcase) requires an understanding of the multilingual referents to have its effect. "*Mencoba menikmati rasa Jawa*" can be read in Indonesian as "tried to enjoy the feeling of being Javanese," but it can also be read *à la Javanaise* as "tried to enjoy the Javanese *Rasa*," in sardonic reference to a fundamental concept in traditional Javanese religio-mystical thought.⁸⁷ The construction of "*mengasemblingnya*", with its casual, misspelled verbification of an American gerund, reminds us of the special freedom that Indonesian offers its users. Lastly, we may note not merely the cynical quotation of the standard conservative Javanese (again, especially Jogjanese) criticism of Jakarta and its culture (does any other *suku* (ethnic group) talk about Jakartans as being "*tanpa ciri kedaerahan sama sekali*"?), and the amused nod to the fact that the phrase "*tanpa tulang punggung*," expressing Jogjanese/Javanese pride, is a translation from the English (and Dutch?)--while "*apa artinya itu, kurang jelas*," which underlines this point, is directed straight at the reader in a style perfectly adapted to the silent complicity of the print-market. A passage so soaked with quotations and allusions to different languages and cultures is virtually impossible in Javanese; and, besides, the whole point of using Indonesian here is precisely to put Java in its place.

I have tried to argue that the invisible presence of Javanese language and literature has been very important for the creativity of Javanese writing in Indonesian. In this sense, it is like a "black

hole"--something one knows is there even if one can not see it. "Javanese literature" has in one sense "disappeared," yet its ghost is very much around--a curious, backhanded tribute to its power. Can the argument be used to illumine the very different attitude of, say, Sundanese writers toward their mother tongue--and their periodic enthusiasm for writing in it? Possibly. It strikes me that Sundanese writers may fear that their language is, not dangerous, but in danger: danger of dying out by neglect, danger of becoming irrelevant, danger of being crowded out by Indonesian, even perhaps by Javanese. Such fears breed tender solicitude, not anger and malice. If we ask ourselves why in the Indonesian context the language and culture of Java are *sui generis*, I do not believe that the answer is simply that the Javanese are far the largest ethnic group, that Javanese culture is somehow "superior" to its competitors, or that the Javanese run the country--though all these propositions have some elements of truth to them. For the fact is that the Javanese language and Javanese culture have for almost a century now been much more of a problem to the Javanese themselves than to anyone else: a problem that can not be resolved by any obvious or easy means, because it involves and implicates almost all sectors of Javanese society.

In "Soemantri"'s sweetly "socialist" novel *Rasa Merdeka* (1924) the protagonists are, naturally, two young Javanese "*socialisten*." The handsome hero Soedjanmo, with his "*roman moeka jang berkoelit hitem manis*" ("attractive brown-skinned face"), is the son of an Assistant Wedana who flees a secure career in the colonial bureaucracy to learn about the modern world and the *rasa merdika* (feeling of freedom) by working as a book-keeper with a Dutch trading company in P[ekalongan]. His sweetheart, Roro (shades of Djawa Dipo!) Soepini, is:

seorang gadis jang dapet peladjaran dari M.U.L.O. [who], meskipoen ia tergolong pada kaoem pertengahan, lantaran tertarik oleh pamilienja, tetapi ia boekannja sebagai kebanyakan temen-temennja; ia soeka sekali mendengerken voordracht-voordracht jang bergoena dan baik bagi oemoem. . . . 88

a girl with a MULO education, who, though she belongs to the middle class by family background, still very much enjoys--unlike most of her friends--listening to lectures that are good and useful for the public. . . .

They first meet at a radical *vergadering* (meeting) and quickly fall in love. Here is a vignette of our radical, middle-class heroine preparing for a romantic tryst:

Sementara lama dari pada ia berpakaian itoe, maka kita lihat dia soedah keloeat dari kamarnja dengan

berbadjoe soetera woengoe berserta memakai centuur soetera koening moeda ber-streep merah dipaloetken dilehernja. Kain pandjang batik Pekalongan jang di pakai dimana ada gambarnja boeroeng merak hinggap di atas dahan pohon, menambahkan poela ketjantikan roro Soepini, bisa menarik hati siapa jang memandangnja.

Ia memakai poela sepatoe sandal koening dari kalfleer dengan haknja jang tinggi, menambahkan djalannja bisa djadi rapi, dan sedikit berlagak.

Satoe tasch ketjil terbikin dari koelit binatang berboeloe jang dipegang di tangan kanan, menoendjoekken poela bahasa ia ada seorang gadis jang termasoek dalem djaman peroebahan.

"Mi," panggil ia pada hambanja perempoean.

Mi lekas dateng padanja.

"Tjariken deeleman sebentar!" soeroeh ia pada

Mi. . . . 89

After some time at her toilette, she now appears to us emerging from her room. She's dressed in a purple silk blouse, and has a bright yellow silk slendang with a red stripe swathed around her shoulders. The Pekalongan batik *kain* [skirt] she's wearing, with its pattern of peacocks perched on branches, accentuates Soepini's beauty, which attracts all who see her.

She is also wearing high-heeled sandals of yellow calf-leather, which bring out the elegance of her gait, and even makes it slightly sway.

The small *tasch* [D, handbag], made from the skin of some furry animal, which she holds in her right hand, also shows that she is a young woman who belongs in this era of change.

"Mi!" she summons her maid.

Mi quickly appears before her.

"Go hail me a carriage!" she orders Mi. . . .

And this *machluk dibelakang rumah*, of whom we are told neither the age, looks, character, feelings, history, or experience, continues for the rest of the story to be the faithful emissary of, and intermediary between, the lovers.

These things run very deep, and change very slowly. Half a century later, it appears that even in the suffering and humiliation of prison, some former PKI leaders still managed to find among their party followers what one can think of as *jongos* to attend to their personal needs. One cannot help wondering what language was used when dirty clothes passed down, and clean clothes moved back up, such prison hierarchies. For "*mendengarkan orang bicara kromo padaku, aku merasa sebagai manusia pilihan, bertempat disuatu ketinggian, dewa dalam tubuh manusia, dan keenakan warisan ini membelai-belai*" ("hearing someone address me in *kromo*, I felt like one of the elect, high on a pedestal, a god in a

human body . . . and the voluptuousness of this inheritance caressed me").⁹⁰

NOTES

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the following friends and colleagues for the many different kinds of help I received in the writing of this paper: Anthony Day, Martin Hatch, George Quinn, Jim Rush, Savitri Scherer, Shiraishi Takashi, Jim Siegel, and Tsuchiya Kenji. For the paper's shortcomings naturally I take sole responsibility.

1. These are my own rough calculations.
2. R. Soetomo, *Kenang-Kenangan* (Surabaya: n.p., 1934), p. 4.
3. I do not want to be misunderstood. Up to the present a steady, if not voluminous, stream of Javanese-language poetry, short stories, novels, and other writings has continued to be produced. But how many people believe that these works are either of abiding quality or seriously engage the attention of Javanese society?
4. I concur with Teeuw, who wrote: "I would not hesitate to call Mrs. Soewarsih [Djojopoespito]'s novel . . . the best novel written by an Indonesian before the war." A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967), p. 64.
5. In the age of steam Holland had neither an army nor a navy capable of taking on any significant European rival--or Japan. In fact, she did not really become an industrialized country till the twentieth century. The weakness of Dutch capitalism is sufficiently indicated by the fact that it was unable to break the royal business monopoly in the Indies, represented by the Nederlandsch Handelmaatschappij, until the 1870s.
6. "In 1860, Lord Wodehouse, then Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office--no doubt influenced by recent French exploits in Vietnam--praised the treaty in 1824: 'It seems to me in many respects very advantageous that the Dutch should possess this Archipelago. If it was not in the hands of the Dutch, it would fall under the sway of some other maritime power, presumably the French, unless we took it ourselves. The French might, if they possessed such an eastern empire, be really dangerous to India and Australia, but the Dutch are and must remain too weak to cause us any alarm.' The Dutch exclusive policy, he also noted, had been relaxed.

There were thus not merely no serious reasons for opposing, but real reasons for accepting Dutch extension in the Archipelago." Nicholas Tarling, *A Concise History of Southeast Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 125.

7. The basic nature of the Anglo-Dutch relationship is indicated by the facts that: (1) the Dutch had to ask London for a release from their obligation to respect Aceh's independence when they decided to conquer it in 1873, and (2) British capital had to be permitted a major role in the Indies economy (as Wodehouse smugly noted). Aside from the large British share in the huge Shell petroleum combine, we may note that by 1912 nearly half the capital invested in the Indies rubber industry, and a sizeable part of that invested in tea cultivation, was British. See Malcolm Caldwell, *Indonesia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 54. John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 254, noted that by 1940 the British had about 450 million guilders' worth of investments in the Indies, while the Dutch total was about 2,500 million.
8. John Hoffmann, "A Colonial Investment," *Indonesia* 27 (April 1979): 65-92. In his *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1973), pp. 128-129, Charles Boxer offers the interesting suggestion that Dutch was defeated already in the seventeenth century, less by "Malay" than by Portuguese, which was already deeply rooted as the language of Asian maritime trade: "In Asia the Portuguese language, or rather the Creole forms thereof, resisted Dutch official pressure and legislation with . . . remarkable success. . . . The contemporary Muslim rulers of Macassar were likewise fluent in Portuguese. . . . In April 1645 Gerrit Demmer, the governor of the Moluccas, observed that Portuguese, 'or even English,' seemed to be an easier language for the Ambonese to learn, and more attractive to them than Dutch. The most striking evidence of the victory of the language of Camoões over that of Vondel was provided by the Dutch colonial capital of Batavia, 'Queen of the Eastern Seas.' The Portuguese never set foot there, save as prisoners of war or else as occasional and fleeting visitors. Yet a Creole form of their language was introduced by slaves and household servants from the region of the Bay of Bengal, and it was spoken by the Dutch and half-caste women born and bred at Batavia, sometimes to the exclusion of their own mother tongue. There was much official criticism of this practice, but, as . . . Governor-General Johan Maetsuyker and his council at Batavia explained to the directors of the Dutch East India Company in 1659: 'The Portuguese language is an easy language to speak and to learn. That is the reason why we cannot prevent the slaves brought here from Arakan who have never heard a word of Portuguese (and indeed even our own children) from taking to that language in preference to all other languages and making it their own.'"
9. Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Fiction as History: A Study of Pre-War Indonesian Novels and Novelists (1920-1942)," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Michigan, 1975), pp. 43-45.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 127. Balai Pustaka usually printed about five thousand copies--three thousand for its reading-rooms, two thousand for the open market.

11. See Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (London: New Left Books, 1976), pp. 218-220.
12. Balai Pustaka published works in both "Malay" and Javanese and there is no reason to think that one line was much more profitable than the other.
13. Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Fiction as History," p. 32-33. The forthcoming dissertation of Ahmat Adam on the origins of the "Malay" press in Indonesia (which he kindly let me see in draft form) is very instructive on this point.
14. The important role of the *peranakan* Chinese in the development of the Indonesian language and literature, long virtually ignored, has recently been the subject of valuable studies by Claudine Lombard-Salmon, C. W. Watson, and others.
15. A simplified list: 1629--Sultan Agung's rout by the VOC before Batavia. 1674--Mataram sacked by Trunojoyo. For the first time in its history Java overrun militarily by *wong Sabrang* (people from overseas): Buginese, Balinese, Madurese, Dutch. 1677--Amangkurat II put on the new throne of Kartasura by the VOC, who defeat Trunojoyo. 1707--Amangkurat III deposed by the VOC and exiled to Ceylon. Puppet Pakubuwono I makes large concessions to the VOC. 1740-1743--Gègèr Pacina. Kartasura sacked by Chinese and Javanese rebels. Pakubuwono II cedes the entire northern *pasisir* (littoral) to the VOC in exchange for a new throne in Surakarta. 1755 and 1757--VOC-imposed division of the realm into Sunanate, Sultanate, and Mangkunegaran. 1809--Hamengkubuwono II deposed by Daendels. 1812--Hamengkubuwono II exiled to Penang by Raffles. c. 1814--Sultanate split by Raffles' creation of the Pakualaman. 1830--defeat and exile of Diponegoro. And so on.
16. Nowhere in his "memoirs" (the *Babad Diponegoro*), I think, does the prince speak of getting rid of the Dutch; indeed, it is not clear that he thinks of "the Dutch" as a collectivity at all. Harry J. Benda and John A. Larkin, eds., *The World of Southeast Asia: Selected Historical Readings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 158, quote him as reporting a voice saying: "I tell you, in three years' time the realm of Jogjakarta [*not* Batavia] will have been brought to perdition." Later on, the Ratu Adil (Just King) tells Diponegoro he "must lead my whole army into battle. Conquer [*not* liberate] Java with it." A slightly different version of all this is given in Ann Kumar, "Diponegoro (1787? - 1855)," *Indonesia* 13 (April 1972): 69-118, at pp. 77, 103.
17. Sartono Kartodirdjo, "Agrarian Radicalism in Java," in Claire Holt et al., eds., *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 71-125.
18. E. Breton de Nijs, *Tempo Doeloe* (Amsterdam: E. M. Querido, 1961), p. 101.

19. I am grateful to Anthony Day for letting me consult the draft of his dissertation on nineteenth-century Javanese literature and thought.
20. R. Ng. Ronggawarsita, *Serat Kala Tida* (Surakarta?: Persatuan, 1933?). The author's translation.
21. Benedict O'Gorman Anderson, "A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light: Transposition in Early Indonesian Nationalist Thought," in Anthony Reid and David Marr, eds., *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 219-248, at p. 220.
22. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia* (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980), p. 99.
23. D. G. E. Hall, in his *A History of Southeast Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1968), wrote that in 1617 "Pajang, which was foolish enough to rebel, became Agung's next [*sic!*] victim, and for her presumption was horribly devastated. . . ." During the 1620-1625 siege of Surabaya "every year after harvest [*sic!*] the Mataram forces systematically ravaged the surrounding countryside" (p. 284). "In 1639 he conquered Balambangan and deported much of its population" (p. 310). Agung's deification by modern Javanese politicians and historians, however understandable, sadly shows how little read even the masterpieces of New Javanese literature have become. The hero of the greatest of these, the *Serat Centini*, one Sèh Amongraga, is a refugee in flight after the destruction of Surabaya by Agung's armies. (It is notable that no scene in this very long poem takes place in a royal court.) At the same time, Reid rightly reminds us of R. Moh. Ali's honorable dissent on Agung in his *Pengantar Ilmu Sedjarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1963). See Anthony Reid, "The Nationalist Quest for an Indonesian Past," in Reid and Marr, *Perceptions*, pp. 281-298, at p. 298.
24. Seventeen fifty may be too early a date for the end of the Dark Ages. See Ann Kumar, "Javanese Historiography In and Of the 'Colonial Period': a Case Study," in *ibid.*, pp. 187-206, for an account of the appalling ferocity of the Dutch conquest of Balambangan between 1767 and 1781. On p. 192 she quotes C. J. Bosch, writing from Bondowoso in 1848, as saying that "this region is perhaps the only one in Java where a once numerous population was *entirely* wiped out" (*italics added*).
25. Cf. S. Supomo, "The Image of Majapahit in Later Javanese and Indonesian Writing," in Reid and Marr, *Perceptions*, pp. 171-185. At p. 182 he reminds us that George Coedès' article, "Le Royaume de Crivijaya," published in 1918, not only proved the existence of Sriwijaya long before the emergence of Majapahit, but brought to light "a whole great kingdom of the past that had been completely forgotten by later generations."

26. A loving monument to this sensuous, sophisticated Old Javanese literary culture is P. J. Zoetmulder, S. J., *Kalangwan, A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974).
27. See my article, "The Last Picture Show: Wayang Bèbèr," in Jean Taylor, et al., eds., *Proceedings, Conference on Modern Indonesian Literature*, 1974 (Madison: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1976), pp. 33-81.
28. See Soebardi, "Radèn Ngabèhi Jasadipura I, Court Poet of Surakarta: His Life and Works," *Indonesia* 8 (October 1969), 81-102. On p. 83, he wrote that after the signing of the Treaty of Gianti in 1755, "Surakarta appeared to come to life. It entered a period of order and tranquillity [*rust en orde?*]; the kingdom was consolidated; the damage left in the wake of the struggle of several years before was repaired. At the same time, there was a marked revival in Javanese cultural life. Great efforts were made to produce new works in Javanese literature and to replace books which had been destroyed during the Chinese rebellion and the Mangkubumi war." My own view, of course, is that the destruction had been going on for two centuries, not merely "several years."
29. Compare the development of *rajasap* in Thai culture in the same era.
30. The mania of the nineteenth-century Javanese *priyayi* (administrative literati, hence Javanese ruling class) for *hormat* (respect, deference, status), certainly accentuated by the colonial regime's introduction of European-style hereditary rights to rank and office, is well known. It is mordantly satirized in Pramoedya's description of the thoughts of "Sastro Kassier" ("Cashier" Sastro) as he prepares to sell his daughter to the Dutch planter Plikemboh:

Tapi jabatan: dia segala dan semua bagi Pribumi bukan tani dan bukan tukang. Harta-benda boleh punah, keluarga boleh hancur, nama boleh rusak, jabatan harus selamat. Dia bukan hanya penghidupan, di dalamnya juga kehormatan, kebenaran, hargadiri, penghidupan sekaligus. Orang berkelahi, berdoa, bertirakat, memfitnah, membohong, membanting tulang, mencelakakan sesama, demi sang jabatan. . . . Semakin jabatan mendekatkan orang pada lingkungan orang Eropa, semakin terhormatlah orang. Sekali pun boleh jadi penghasilan tidak seberapa dan yang ada padanya hanya satu belangkon belaka. Orang Eropa adalah lambang kekuasaan tanpa batas. Dan kekuasaan mendatangkan uang. Mereka telah kalahkan raja-raja, para sultan dan susuhunan, para ulama dan para jawara.

- Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Anak Semua Bangsa* [Child of All Peoples] (Jakarta: Hasta Mitra, 1980), p. 130.
31. J.L.A. Brandes, "Drie copere platen uit den Mataramschen tijd," *TBG* (32) p. 345, as cited in E.M. Uhlenbeck, *Studies in Javanese Morphology* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), p. 294.
 32. This may help account for the great change in atmosphere from the robust, self-confident sensuousness of the Kalangwan literature to the melancholy, omen-fraught, turgid introspectiveness of much post-1750 court literature.
 33. On these vernacularization movements, see Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), passim; and Aira Kemiläinen, *Nationalism* (Jyväskylä: Kustantajat Publishers, 1964), esp. pp. 208-215.
 34. Two interesting exceptions are noted later on p. 30.
 35. Uhlenbeck, *Studies*, p. 284.
 36. This is not to deny that within the *ummat* written Arabic sometimes played an esoteric role, rather like Sanskrit in an earlier era. See, for example, my article "The Languages of Indonesian Politics," *Indonesia* 1 (April 1966): 92-94.
 37. Until recently there was no word in Javanese for "society."
 38. Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo, "Wordlist of Javanese Non-Ngoko Vocabularies," *Indonesia* 7 (April 1969): 165-190, gives about 1,000 *krama* and 300 *krama inggil* items.
 39. This is not in fact 100 percent true in all circumstances, but the exceptions are rare enough, I think, that they can be ignored for the sake of the argument.
 40. My doggerel translation of Section V, stanza 58, the original to be found on p. 79 of Philippus Van Akkeren, *Een Gedrocht en toch de Volmaakte Mens, De Javaanse Suluk Gatoloco* (The Hague: Excelsior, 1951). My translation of the full text has appeared in two parts, in *Indonesia*, nos. 32 (October 1981) and 33 (April 1982).
 41. This revivalist spirit is already evident with the Jasadipuras (and has parallels in mainland Southeast Asia, particularly nineteenth-century Siam). But it is something new. The poets of the Kalangwan era loved decaying ruins and overgrown shrines, but they loved them sensibly as ruins, without nostalgia or any desire to "restore" their past splendor. Nothing could be more foreign to the nineteenth-century Javanese spirit.
 42. Most of the biographical material in this paragraph is drawn from Th. Pigeaud, "In Memoriam Professor Poerbatjaraka," *Bijdrage tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 122:4 (1966): 405-412, which

includes a full bibliography of Poerbatjaraka's works. There is useful additional information in G.W.J. Drewes, "De 'Ontdekking' van Poerbatjaraka," in *ibid.*, 129:4 (1973): 482-491.

43. I think he would have enjoyed Minke's formidable apostrophe: "Ya Allah . . . nenek moyang yang keterlaluan!" ("Ah, my ancestors . . . you are too much!") Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia*, p. 108.
44. This article, written in collaboration with C.M. Pleyte, appeared in *TBG* 56 (1914): 257-280.
45. It seems to have got under way near Blora around 1890. In 1907, an alarmed colonial regime exiled its putative leader Surontiko Samin. See further George McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 43.
46. See Harry J. Benda and Lance Castles, "The Samin Movement," *Bijdrage* 125:2 (1969): 207-240, which remains much the most sensitive and vivid account of the movement in English.
47. Soetomo, *Kenang-Kenangan*, p. 42. His father died unexpectedly in 1907.
48. Imam Supardi, *Dr. Soetomo - Riwayat Hidup dan Perjuangannya* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1951), pp. 36 and 38.
49. For this information, and the materials cited in the next five notes, I am very grateful to Shiraishi Takashi.
50. P. J. Zürcher, Jr., "Djawa Dipo," *De Indische Gids* 42 (1920): 691-695, at pp. 692-693.
51. Pawitrohadinoto, "De Djowodipo-Beweging," *De Indische Gids* 41 (1919): 220-223. The name derived from the magical "weapon" Aji Dipo belonging to Wibisana. In the war between the forces of Rahwana and Rama's army of apes, Rahwana's son Indrajit used his magical weapon Warnabara to put the apes to sleep by darkening their hearts and minds. But then Wibisana used the Aji Dipo to revive them by bringing light to their spirits (p. 221).
52. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
53. *Ibid.* Zürcher, "Djawa Dipo," p. 692, attributed this to "a kind of conservatism" originating from his "childhood years." Some Dutch reports claimed that Djawa Dipo had no influence outside the Sarekat Islam and the newspapers *Oetoesan Hindia* and *Sinar Djawa*; and that even in the S.I. itself and the "Kaumkringen" of Solo there was fierce opposition to it. State Archives, The Hague, "Algemeene beschouwingen over de Inlandsche pers in 1918 [Jan. to mid-March; April to July]" *Mailrapport* 264x/18 Geheim.
54. Pawitrohadinoto, "De Djowodipo-Beweging," p. 222. The case of the Tenggerese is sufficiently well known, that of the Priangan

villages less so. The writer gave as his source R.A. Kern, "Een Javaansch sprekende bevolking in de Preanger Regentschappen."
(No place of publication cited.)

55. Ibid., " . . . de afschaffing van het 'kromo' de vernietiging beteekent van de Javaansche letterkunde. . . . "
56. Not only literature, of course. The belief among genteel Javanese that *krama* expresses the very essence of Javanese civilization--and thus should be a source of pride for Javanese patriots--is amusingly depicted in this exchange between Minke and his kindly, conservative mother:

"Itu tanda kau bukan Jawa lagi, tak mengindahkan siapa lebih tua, lebih berhak akan kehormatan, siapa yang lebih berkuasa."

"Ah, Bunda, jangan hukum sahaya. Saya hormati yang lebih benar."

"Orang Jawa sujud berbakti kepada yang lebih tua, lebih berkuasa, satu jalan pada penghujung keluhuran. Orang harus berani mengalah, Gus. . . . "

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia*, p. 116. Elsewhere (p. 53), Minke comments that he does not wish to "menganiaya" ("torment") his sweetheart, the Eurasian beauty Annelies, "with a language that forces her to situate herself socially within the peculiar intricacy of the Javanese way of life."

57. Zürcher, "Djawa Dipo," p. 692 (italics added).
58. Ibid., pp. 694-695.
59. In the entertaining account of an early "vergadering" (meeting) contained in Soemantri's radical novel *Rasa Merdeka, Hikajat: Soedjanmo* (Semarang: Drukkerij V.S.T.P., 1924), pp. 72-93, we find, at the collective level, the use of "saudara-saudara" ("brothers and sisters" in Indonesian) and at the "inter-comrade" level, "broer" and "zus" ("brother" and "sister" in Dutch).
60. Both passages occur on p. 121 of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Tjerita dari Djakarta, Sekumpulan Karikatur Keadaan dan Manusia* (Jakarta: Grafica, 1957).
61. These are, par excellence, the colonial words for household servants. The creation of *jongos* is sociologically very instructive. In traditional upper-class Javanese homes adult males were almost never employed as servants inside the house: the danger of cross-class sex with noble wives and daughters was too great. It was the Dutch who created the implicitly "castrated" adult male household servant, with whom their daughters would be quite safe! One is reminded of Richard Wright's famous story about the

black husband who, when his wife falls sick, puts on her clothes and does her work as a maid in a white household--and the whites never once notice that their servant has changed sex.

62. I say "nineteenth century" advisedly. In a splendid article on the Mangkunegaran court of the 1790s, Ann Kumar has shown how *priyayi* was there used in contemptuous contrast to (Djawa Dipo's!) *wira* (man, male). See Ann Kumar, "Javanese Court Society and Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Record of a Lady Soldier," [Pt. II: "Political Developments: The Courts and the Company, 1784-1791,"] *Indonesia* 30 (October 1980): 67-111, at p. 108.
63. Cf. Minke's mother: "Orang Jawa sujud berbakti pada yang lebih tua, lebih berkuasa, satu jalan pada penghujung keluhuran." ("The Javanese serve reverently those who are older, and more powerful--that is the one path to the heights of glory.") Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Bumi Manusia*, p. 116.
64. See Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Monograph Series, 1968), pp. 56-57.
65. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Tjerita dari Djakarta*, p. 7. J.P. Coen, founder of the Dutch East India Company stronghold of Batavia (Jakarta) in 1619. Pieter Both, first Governor-General in the Indies (1609-1614). Cornelis de Houtman, leader of the first Dutch naval expedition to the Indies, 1595-1597. During the Japanese Occupation of Java (1942-1945), prominent symbols of Dutch colonialism, including Coen's statue, were removed and often destroyed. The Financiën Building, headquarters of the colonial Department of Finance, was located on the eastern side of today's Merdeka Square. Between 1946 and 1949 Batavia (Jakarta) was under restored Dutch colonial control, and was the capital of the "Federalist" state that the Dutch attempted to build to compete with the Indonesian Republic in the interior.
66. (1) *Di kala Coen*; (2) *Belum djadi artja*; (3) *(Achirmja) djadi artja*; (4) *artja diusir Djepang*--that is, any date between 1619 and 1942. Notice the difference between the hybrid *gedung Financiën* and, say, *Departemen Keuangan*.
67. Contained in *Subuh* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1950), pp. 38-61.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 55. The two following quotations also come from p. 55.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

72. He knows he will die; but Bima can not overcome his *kasaktèn* (magical power) except by using dishonorable methods.
73. Recall Sobi's and Inah's distinguished ancestor: "*Turunan kedua-- hamba djuga, serdadu tak berkelas!*" ("The second generation-- servant once again: soldier, without rank!") *Tjerita dari Djakarta*, p. 7.
74. Ibid., pp. 42-43.
75. Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha, *Arjuna Mencari Cinta* (Jakarta: Cypress, 1977), p. 7. My analysis in the following pages owes much to Savitri Scherer, "Introducing Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha," *Indonesia* 31 (April 1981): 31-52.
76. As we learn from *Arjuna Mencari Cinta* and its sequel *Arjuna Drop Out* (Jakarta: Cypress, 1980), Arjuna II's family consists of the following people: his father is Bratasena II (Bratasena I is Arjuna I's elder brother); his mother is Banowati II (Banowati I is Arjuna I's mistress, married to his cousin Suyudana I); his uncle is Sangkuni II (Sangkuni I is the evil chief minister to Suyudana I); his grandmother is Draupadi II, or Padi ("*tapi bukan Dewi Sri*," ["but not Dewi Sri," that is, the goddess of rice] jokes Yudhistira on p. 9 of *Arjuna Drop Out*), while Draupadi I is no blood relation to Arjuna I at all; his grandfather is called Walmiki (Valmiki is the legendary author of the *Ramayana*!) A further nice touch is that when Arjuna II enrolls briefly at Gajah Mada University, one of his "*kawan sefakultas*" (friend in the same department/faculty) is called Cakil! (cf. above, p. 29).
77. Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha, *Arjuna Mencari Cinta*, p. 113.
78. Ibid., p. 152.
79. Ibid., pp. 185-186.
80. This is entirely "out of character" and thus a nice example of secret dialogue between author and reader at right angles to the text.
81. A spokesman for the Direktorat Pembinaan Film told *Sinar Harapan* on August 14, 1979 that "all *wayang* names in this story must be replaced" by names "*yang bukan [sic!] berasal dari dunia pewayangan, termasuk judul ceritanya*," ("which do not originate from the *wayang* world, including the title of the story") so that it would not "*merugikan dunia pewayangan*" ("damage the *wayang* world"). See *Tempo*, September 1, 1979, for this, and for a witty editorial comment by Goenawan Mohammad.
82. Aswatama I, among the "worst" of the Kurawa, treacherously murders Pancawala I, as well as Banowati I and Srikandi I, after the Bratayuda War is over. Aswatama II, however, is simply a bank

clerk who is "*segan mencuri uang negara. Betapa ia telah menyia-
yiakan kesempatan yang ada! Betapa bodohnya ia mau berjujur-
jujur di tengah lingkungan dan masyarakatnya yang korup!*"
("reluctant to steal the public's money. *How* he has wasted the
opportunities before him. *How* stupid he is to want to be an
'honest Joe' in the midst of his corrupt milieu and a corrupt
society!") *Arjuna Drop Out*, p. 113.

83. Ibid., p. 28.

84. Yudhistira, himself of very humble origins, has assumed one of the
most power-full *wayang* names. Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha is an
"expansion" of Yan, the nickname derived from his "real" name
Mul-yan-a.

85. In fewer than thirty years this stone monument to the Revolutionary
dead in the former Revolutionary capital has become a "fossil."

86. Ibid., p. 23.

87. This kind of mockery is more brutally expressed in a passage
where Setyawati II, the first of Arjuna II's jilted girl-friends
(she eventually becomes the lesbian lover of his younger sister),
quarrels with her father, a captain in the Navy: "*ingin saja
rasanya ia menceburkan sang Papi ke samudra luas biar ditelan
Naga Taksaka atau Hyang Antaboga. Syukur-syukur kalau tenggelam
ke dalam telinga Dewaruci dan tak bisa kembali* (Ibid., p. 51).
Nothing is more sacred to the *dunia pewayangan* (wayang world)
than Bima's finding the ultimate *kawruh* (mystical knowledge) by
entering the ear of Dewa Ruci (a miniature form of his own self)
at the bottom of the ocean.

88. Soemantri, *Rasa Merdeka*, p. 75.

89. Ibid., p. 101. Is it wholly unfair to see in the following descrip-
tion of Soepini an early version of Yudhistira Ardi Noegraha's
blangkon-cum-samsonite priyayi Yogyakarta? Wouldn't substituting
pembangunan (development) for the more modest *perubahan* (change)
do the trick? But Soemantri writes wholly without *ironi*.

90. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *Anak Semua Bangsa*, pp. 183-184.

Tradition and Modernity: The Nanyang Artists

T. K. Sabapathy

The scope of the topic I have proposed encompasses the whole of Southeast Asia. The issues and ideals that have shaped modern art, which continue to influence its varied practice, are primarily rooted in conceptions and options framed by competing traditions. The processes by which models made available by such traditions are apprehended and creatively used have different implications for artists in the different societies of Southeast Asia. Underlying the diversity are shared, anxious concerns regarding the purpose of modern art and the identity of the modern artist.

The topic, specifically, deals with a number of artists who migrated to Singapore from China in the 1930s and the late 1940s and who, through their work and production procedures, initiated modern art activity in the republic and in Malaysia. Their efforts crystallize aspects of the ways in which competing traditions are domesticated and transformed with the purpose of creating pictorial expressions that are consciously modern. I refer to them, collectively, as the Nanyang artists.¹

Is such a topic worthy of deliberation, or is it merely a projection of an indulgence bordering on the inconsequential? The question assumes credence in relation to the critical aims and principles that have institutionalized the study of Southeast Asian art.

Studies of Southeast Asian art, unlike those of almost any other aspect of the cultures of the region, stop well short of the modern era. For the historian of art, the post-Angkorean and Majapahit centuries are featureless wastes. Consequently, monuments and artifacts reflecting Islamic values in peninsular and island Southeast Asia have yet to receive any, but spurious, attention. Inspired by humanistic, unitary visions, extant and current studies of Southeast Asian art seek to vivify the Great Tradition, one that is comparable to the preferred traditions in China and India; in the case of the former a history of painting personified by literati painters, and in the case of the latter the elaboration of iconic configurations shaped by

sastric formulations. Leaning heavily toward the latter, critical principles suited to the realization of this aspiration compel exclusive focus on icons and monuments that symbolize aesthetic norms determined by metaphysics, ritual, and literary concordance. These are prescriptions for a "theology of art"--a theology revealed by iconography.²

It will be difficult to identify a more resolute advocate of this faith than the late Ananda Coomaraswamy. In an oration delivered at Boston College in 1939, Coomaraswamy declared, unequivocally, that "Iconography is art," and concluded, "It is only when we understand the *raison d'être* of iconography that we can be said to have gone back to first principles; and that is what we mean by the 'Reduction of art to Theology'."³

The orthodoxy informing the study of Southeast Asian art is the result of a subscription to such a conviction. The propriety of subject matter for research, the adoption of congenial ideologies of historicism, and the methodology of scholarship are circumscribed by it. Not surprisingly, modern art is proscribed from such a view and ambition. In this connection it should be remembered that the emergence of the study of modern art as such, as a legitimate critical enterprise, its acceptance in the hallowed precincts of the departments of art history in Europe and in the United States, required radical adjustments to and revisions of corresponding conceptions regarding tradition, aesthetics, and the ideals of art. Consequently, fresh, critical schemas are continually proposed and tested, with a view toward generating plural modes of apprehending and explicating art--a view which, in context, is entrenched in an undiminished faith in humanism. Comparable ambitions and procedures await the renovation of the study of Southeast Asian art.⁴

It is axiomatic that the emergence of modern art implies the existence of parent traditions. Accordingly, one of the identifying characteristics of this kind of activity is its self-consciousness toward the history of art, of all art--a self-consciousness realized by strategies that challenge and subvert the structures and ideals of traditional art practices, thereby provoking fresh values and directions. The conception of the avant-garde, its inexorable advance, is dramatized in these terms. Critical accounts of modern art are anchored in these assumptions.

The development of modern art in Southeast Asia does not necessarily conform to criteria based on such assumptions. Its development is linked with historical processes related to the attainment of political independence, self-determination in structuring new states, securing a semblance of harmony between the old and the new, and safeguarding cultural identity. These processes exert enormous pressures, explicitly and implicitly, on the purpose and meaning of modern art activity.

Conceptions regarding identity, individuality, and art as the expression of private as well as public values are conditioned by them. Consequently, the sensibilities with which traditions are viewed, the choices that have to be made between competing stylistic models are

contingent not only for the realization of formal transgressions but also for the production of images that symbolize shared aspirations and meanings. Notions of individuality, of innovation and expressiveness, while earnestly sought for, defended, and cherished, are actualized not exclusively in personalized journeys but hedged by the need to image a collective spirit. In these respects, modern artists in Southeast Asia experience shared concerns. An acquaintance with particulars concerning some of these features may well be conducive to a sympathetic discussion of the topic.

Michael Sullivan relates an incident in his account of *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* which permits a convenient entry into the discussion. It is as follows.

In the summer of 1944 the All-China Art Association organised its second national exhibition in Chungking. Pictures chosen for the exhibition were to be hung in two halls, "Chinese painting" in one hall, "Western painting" in the other.

P'ang Hsun-ch'in submitted four pictures to the "Chinese painting" section. The panel of judges took one look at them and suggested that he take them across to the Western department. He did so only to be told that they belonged with the traditional paintings in the other hall. The organisers then started an argument among themselves as to where P'ang Hsun-ch'in's pictures should be put. While the artist stood patiently waiting for them to decide, he too began to wonder where, precisely, he belonged. Was he really a Chinese painter at all?⁵

A seemingly simple incident. Sullivan sees in it the struggle between East and West, between one tradition and another, "the dilemma of all oriental artists and intellectuals who have found themselves heirs to one tradition and claimants to another," and a crisis that cleft not only China but all Asian countries.⁶

Contemporary with the predicament presented by P'ang Hsun-ch'in to the adjudicators of the exhibition at Chungking was the great debate over the future of art and culture that raged throughout Indonesia. Glimpses into it provide vivid testimony of its passionate conduct and the scale of the issues.

Writing in the late 1930s, Sudjojono made an impassioned plea to his fellow artists to depict "reality," "truth," and "life now" and not to seek "beauty in antiquity--Majapahit or Mataram, . . . because art is work based on our daily life transmuted by the artist himself who is immersed in it."⁷ For Sudjojono, the past is truly dead; the artist should not be encumbered by it. Other voices counselled differently, for it was necessary not only to look forward but to look back.

In addition to conflicting views concerning the past, positions were clearly drawn regarding the relationship, and choices that have to be made, between indigenous tradition and modernity--the latter understood as "westernization" and translated in terms of materialism and individualism. In these respects, the poet and playwright Sanusi Pane offers the following diagnosis and conclusion:

European culture flourishes on materialism, intellectualism and individualism. . . . Individualism breeds boundless competition in the economic sphere. In art, the goal is *art pour l'art*.

. . . in the East, . . . materialism, intellectualism and individualism are not needed so much. Man is not forced to combat nature in trying to master it. He feels himself in unity with the world around him.

In a riveting simile, Pane likens the West to Faust and the East to Arjuna "meditating on Mt. Indrakila."⁸

Takdir Alisjahbana, in his attempts to demystify the tired cliches about East and West, supported by a recognition for the need for modernization, began espousing a holistic view. " . . . The Western technology and science that they want," he admonished, "cannot be separated from Western philosophy, art and customs--in short, from the Western way and view of life." In a swift, cleaving stroke he dispels Pane's mystic vision of the East: "It is not likely that airplanes, well equipped hospitals, efficient banks and rationalised agriculture would spring from spirits as Gandhi's or Tagore's."⁹

Alisjahbana gradually assumes a conciliatory and accommodating stance and calls for a reinterpretation of traditional heritage in ways that can be relevant to the modern age. About art he says:

If traditional arts and crafts can be taught in the schools alongside the scientific knowledge and the values and mental categories developed by modern culture, there is every reason to hope that the two cultural elements will produce in the talented and gifted student a synthesis of the artistic trends of our times flavoured with something peculiarly Indonesian.¹⁰

This is a paean to the humanistic vision in which craft and industry, tradition and modernity, the universal and the particular attain a grand

synthesis through the disinterested intervention of the incarnation of genius. It is a vision that continues to sustain him.¹¹

It is not, however, my intention to engage in a critical reading of these statements. I present them in order to indicate the scope of the issues and the flavor of the discussion. The citation by Sullivan as well as the proclamations I have culled from the debate in Indonesia are not peculiar to these two countries; they allude to abiding preoccupations in the countries of Asia, particularly in the twentieth century. And lest it be understood that the crisis or the dilemma has been resolved, or for that matter forgotten, in November 1979 the Fukuoka Art Museum in Japan was inaugurated with an exhibition entitled Asian Artists Exhibition; the objective, " . . . to trace the modernization of Asian art . . . by clarifying how traditional and modern art . . . have interacted."¹²

It is apparent from the country reports submitted to this exhibition and for its sequel, organized in the following year, that conceptions of modernity with respect to art activity continue to be realized and articulated in terms of choices impelled by transformations of traditions that are perceived as competing with one another. Regarding such processes Sullivan, writing in 1960, was sufficiently optimistic to remark that they are generative.¹³ Sharing his optimism, I now proceed to examine the Nanyang artists.

In the early months of 1937, a handful of art enthusiasts met to discuss the possibility of establishing an art school in Singapore. A leading voice was Lim Hak Tai, who had studied and taught in art academies in Amoy, China, and had arrived in Singapore that very year. Their enthusiasm and optimism were based on the understanding that such a school in Singapore--a prosperous, commercial center situated between East and West, with a multi-racial society and surrounded by tropical beauty--"could certainly benefit all by bringing about an artistic and cultural atmosphere."¹⁴ Later that year, in a small, dingy room in the vicinity of the Geylang Gay World Amusement Park, Lim Hak Tai and three others began formal instruction in art. The first enrollment consisted of fourteen students. And so the Nan-yang Yi-shu Yuan (the Nanyang Academy of Fine Art) was inaugurated. Lim Hak Tai assumed the dual role of teacher and principal, remaining its principal until his death in 1962.

It was the first school of art in Singapore and is still the only one; until 1966, it was the only institution available to students from Malaysia wishing to pursue an education in art. From the fifties and throughout the sixties, the Academy emerged as a vital center for art activity in both countries. One of the most significant and distinct directions in modern art in Singapore and in Malaysia was shaped in the Academy; a direction enlivened by two generations of artists and which, until the present time, continues to be influential in a variety of ways.

In any art context there are artists who by a combination of imagination, consistency of effort, selective and purposeful use of

skills and resources produce works which provoke new values and fresh visions. There were such individuals who taught and practiced at the Academy. In addition to Lim Hak Tai, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Chong Swee, Chen Wen Hsi, and Georgette Liying Chen--who joined the staff at various times between 1946 and 1953--attained such a stature. To this group must be added Liu Kang who, although not an instructor in the Academy, was closely associated with it and shared similar aims with those in it.

As teachers they projected art as a means of acquiring knowledge and as symbolizing cultural values. As artists they produced paintings which, collectively, can be recognized as marking the earliest modern art achievement in Singapore. Their attitude to painting is characterized by a free-ranging, eclectic approach, employing styles derived, initially, from two sources--Chinese pictorial traditions and the School of Paris.

The antecedents for such an approach are to be found in China, particularly in the southern cities of Shanghai, Nanjing, and Guangdong where the modern, experimental movements in the visual art, as well as in other cultural expressions, were the most active. In these cities, by the twenties and thirties, artists of widely differing persuasions were intently engaged in reinvesting Chinese art with new scope and dimension. Their endeavors were anchored in a deeply felt need to recover the pristine past, renovate vapid conventions, and develop modern expressions identified with the School of Paris. These orientations and premises formed part of the education of the Nanyang artists, all of whom studied in the academies in Shanghai.¹⁵ Their activity in Singapore can be viewed as extending and elaborating some of these procedures, adjusting and relating them to a different context.

The two sources that I have mentioned require amplification. Bearing in mind the reverential attitude of the Chinese artist toward the past, the recurrent use of schemas and conventions from tradition in order to create new pictorial structures is not surprising. A knowledge of the history of art, in a generative sense, has always been an integral aspect of the creative aspiration of the artist in China. For the Chinese artists, style and innovation were eminently personal matters, although clearly rooted in tradition. Or, as a scholar put it recently, "He could acquire the authority and the confidence to do his own thing only by being immersed in an all-enfolding past."¹⁶ The Nanyang artists who practice Chinese painting as such, Chen Chong Swee and Chen Wen Hsi, implicitly subscribe to this value.

Radically different values are proposed by the Parisian model. The diverse styles collectively known as the School of Paris manifest the new, modern status of the artist and fresh purposes for art activity. Accordingly, the artist assumes a heroic stature, heightened by inalienable claims to individuality and self-determination. Art activity is regarded as a ceaseless, personal search for the new, uninhibited by aesthetic dogmas, and as dramatizing choices and decisions made by the artist. In the search, the artist ranges freely over the entire history

of art, including that of non-European cultures. The School of Paris was not the creation of indigenous Parisians alone; artists from other centers contributed toward its formation. Significantly, it was the only art-context in which *the idea of the modern* was articulated and legitimized. It was a compelling model. In the absence of a comparable or an alternate one, the Nanyang artists, like so many artists in Asia who were looking for a new art, turned to it.

In addition to proposing an attitude which was self-consciously modern, the School of Paris provided for the Nanyang artists a variety of pictorial schemas, technical and perceptual procedures in which the obligations of having to portray traditional iconic properties were either rejected or neutralized by formal and expressive considerations. The absence of an explicit iconography released the viewer from having to apprehend such productions in relation to particular ideologies. For the artist, the schemas were appealing because they were independent of conditional, symbolic, or ideational values; consequently, they felt free to select and wrest from these schemas features and properties suited to individual purposes.

The appeal of the School of Paris for the Nanyang artists is clearly for this reason. The schemas are read as compendia of pictorial languages, potentially available for new and different creative uses. They are interpreted and restructured with the intention of producing formal innovations as well as composing images which reflect their adopted environment.

The ways in which the Nanyang artists used these models varied with each artist. Underlying the variation is an undeniable mastery of the technical aspects of both the easel picture and Chinese painting. In addition to working within these traditions simultaneously, some of the more remarkable innovations are the result of the fusion of the two traditions. For example, the handscroll and the hanging scroll are converted into easel pictures thereby introducing new, formal considerations regarding the structure of space, the function of color, the composition of form, and the sequence of time. Conversely, the principles of easel painting are transformed by altering the figure-ground relationship. That is to say, while the figure is constructed to project an image of concrete existence, its spatial occupancy is undefined. In such instances, the customary expectations of the viewer regarding the reading of a picture is appreciably altered.

Besides formal transgressions, the works produced by the Nanyang artists reflect a common source for pictorial content. The source is the immediate environment. This feature can be clarified by referring to a disclosure made by a graduate of the Academy. Chung Chen Sun (class of 1952-1955) recalls as follows:

Lim Hak Tai was the man who gave the Academy its direction. He always suggested to the staff and the students that the subject matter in their works should reflect the reality of the Southern Seas.

He emphasized that our work should depict the localness of the place we all live in.¹⁷

The recollection conveniently formulates positions and attitudes shared by the Nanyang artists.

In 1952, Liu Kang, Cheong Soo Pieng, Chen Wen Hsi, and Chen Chong Swee journeyed to Bali. The choice of Bali is significant. As if in response to Lim Hak Tai's urgings, these artists sought the one context in Southeast Asia in which art and life appeared to be inextricably meshed and which also promised the extension of pictorial content. The decision for the journey was a deliberate one.

A year later an exhibition of their work was held. In the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition, Liu Kang gives a moving account of their experience. Recalling a statement by Charlie Chaplin, who toured Indonesia in the early thirties, "Whoever hasn't been to Bali can't say that he has been to Southeast Asia," Liu Kang adds, "It is the last paradise." He describes the grace of the Balinese and admires the spiritual integration of their life, their sense of humor and of play. Of art, he says, "Art represents the culture of the people. Whereas in other countries, an effort has to be made to get people to appreciate art, this is not the problem in Bali."¹⁸

For these artists, Bali was a revelation. A situation in which life, ritual, and art are inseparable was eagerly, enthusiastically accepted as an ideal environment for art activity. Indeed, it was in anticipation of living and working in such an environment that the journey was undertaken.

An immediate consequence of the journey was the emergence of the human figure as an important pictorial motif. A variety of techniques, arrangements, and compositions are employed in the depiction of the figure. Subsequently, these crystallize into figure types which prove to be influential to other artists. For these four artists, the human figure generates schemas through which "the reality of the Southern Seas" and "the localness of the place" are screened and transformed into concrete images. Such images imbue their productions with specific, discernable content.

The journey to Bali brings into focus an implication of a more general significance and one related to the premise with which I began this discussion: namely, that the development of modern art in Southeast Asia is rooted in conceptions and options framed by competing traditions. In my account of the Nanyang artists I have, thus far, outlined two such traditions. And it is the case that in such accounts that exist, the tendency is to explain modern art in the region in terms of two contending traditions: one, whose sources are in the East, and the other, in the West. The sojourn in Bali throws into relief a third: intra-Southeast Asian influences and connections. There is, of course, precedence for this feature.

Studies of the monumental art of Southeast Asia, as well as of other traditional cultural expressions, provide ample evidence for such connections, which have frequently resulted in the creation of forms and structures particular to the area. The notion that Southeast Asia is a distinct entity, possessing unity in terms of related and shared cultural values, is corroborated by such evidence. For different reasons and on the basis of different criteria, the development of modern art, and for that matter of other forms of modern expression, suggest interconnections and shared characteristics.

Detailed critical studies of the productions by these artists will undoubtedly highlight influences of traditional Balinese art and theatre forms and of modern Indonesian painting. The fusion of technical and compositional devices selected from diverse pictorial traditions are clearly realized in these productions. The exhibition held in 1953 unveiled a pictorial style distinct to these artists.

In addition, the journey to Bali was a conscious undertaking to secure a milieu in Southeast Asia which can be claimed to be comparable to any in Europe. Writing in the catalogue of the exhibition of 1953, Liu Kang declared, "Working in Bali is as good as working in Paris." The declaration has added significance, for on completing his studies in Shanghai in 1929, Liu Kang travelled to Paris and lived and worked there for five years.

The Nanyang artists viewed traditions primarily as sources for such formal properties that would facilitate the composition of representational images. The conventions and techniques acquired in the academies in China were adjusted, fused, and continually revised in order to render, vividly, subject matter reflecting "the reality of the Southern Seas" and "the localness of the place." Their productions established pictorial schemas for the artists of the sixties and the early seventies.

NOTES

1. The term Nanyang artists was, in all probability, first used by Redza Piyadasa, in a paper read at the First National Cultural Congress in Kuala Lumpur, 1971. "Penilaian Pencapaian Kini Senilukis Malaysia," *Dewan Sastra*, November 1971. In 1979, on the invitation of the National Museum of Art, Piyadasa organized a retrospective exhibition of the work of the Nanyang artists; it marked the first critical appraisal of these artists. *Pameran Retrospektif Pelukis-Pelukis Nanyang, Muzium Seni Negara Malaysia*, 1979.
2. Emile Male, *The Gothic Image* (London: The Fontana Library, 1961), p. 1.

3. "The Christian and Oriental, or True, Philosophy of Art," in *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New York, 1956, p. 41.
4. Strictly speaking, the relationship should be reversed, because the premises and methods for the study of Asian art are derived from the principles of Western history of art.
5. Michael Sullivan, *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1960), p. 19.
6. Ibid., p. 19.
7. Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia. Continuities and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 196.
8. Ibid., p. 212.
9. Ibid.
10. *Indonesia in the Modern World*, trans. by Benedict Anderson (New Delhi, 1961), pp. 191-194.
11. Takdir Alisjahbana, "Search for the Values of the Future and the Art of the Future," in *Art and Future*, ed. by Margaret Alisjahbana (Jakarta, 1978), pp. 37-59.
12. *Asian Artists Exhibition*, Fukuoka Art Museum, 1979, p. 6.
13. Sullivan, *Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century*, p. 19.
14. Tan Tee Chie, "Historical Sketch of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts," in *40th Anniversary Souvenir Magazine of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts* (Singapore, 1978), p. 10.
15. The curriculum in the academies consisted invariably of studio instruction in Chinese painting and oil (Western painting supported by outdoor sketching). T. K. Sabapathy, "The Harmonics of Painting," *The Straits Times*, December 2, 1981.
16. F. W. Mote, "The Arts and 'The Theorizing Mode' of Civilization," in *Artists and Tradition: Uses of the Past in Chinese Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 6.
17. Redza Piyadasa, "The Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts" in *Pameran Retrospektif Pelukis-Pelukis Nanyang* (Kuala Lumpur: National Museum of Art, 1979), p. 32.
18. *Pictures from Bali*, Singapore, 1953.
19. Ibid.

Asian Theatre of Communion

A Look at Contemporary Philippine Theatre

Doreen G. Fernandez

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about Philippine theatre in the last decade is that it was staged and written in a dictatorship--within Martial Law and the reverberations of Martial Law. This fact shaped the theatre, determined its matter, manner, and methods, and indeed returned it to its beginnings as a theatre of communion.

The Beginnings

To clarify this, we must begin at those beginnings. Philippine theatre began in ritual, in the mimetic action with which man strove to control the uncontrollable--human relationships, natural phenomena, illness, death, interaction with nature and neighbor, family, or foe. When the Taosug mimed a bird of prey in a wedding dance; or the Maranaw carried symbols of the spirit of the waters to fields prepared for rice-planting; or a bride affected coyness upon mounting the staircase, entering, or sitting down in her father-in-law's house and was given a slave, a jewel, or a gift at each stage; or the Ifugao danced at a funeral to cheer a dead grandfather on his long journey, each was using the magic of symbol and imitation to bring about a fruitful marriage, or a rich harvest, or peace for the departed spirit of a family member. From small symbols and actions may have come the more obviously theatrical--war dances, peace pacts, burial and marriage chants and ceremonies, and the like.

These roots of Philippine theatre are still visible in the non-Christian and Muslim groups but are fast disappearing with the influx of media and modernization. The important thing to remember about them in the present context is that they were theatre of communion--community-born, centered, and directed. In them actors and audience were one, since anyone could be and at one time or other was or would be a participant; there was no distance across the footlights. In this kind of theatre the individual found meaning as

part of a community. He was the young boy being welcomed into manhood or the warrior showing the boy what fighting meant; she was the girl about to be married or the old lady speaking in chanted verse for the bride's family. In this kind of theatre the community was consolidated, its oneness reaffirmed by the harvest, or the birth, or the death, or the victory.

After the sixteenth century and contact with the West, Philippine theatre wandered through various stages "in search of a fix," to borrow Robert Corrigan's phrase. During the centuries of Spanish colonization, there were the religious dramas and dramatizations of the effort to Christianize the Filipinos: the *sinakulos* and *panunuluyans*; the *tibags* and *salubongs*. There were also the *komedyas* that told of love and war between Moors and Christians. In these were introduced such Western theatrical elements as stage, costume, script, and stage machinery, along with foreign matter--the Passion and death of Christ, the search for the true cross, love in Albania and Persia, war in Francia and Italia. All were of course indigenized, embroidered with apocrypha and adapted to native perceptions and values, but remained basically borrowed forms native only in feeling and manner of presentation.

In the early years of American colonization, two forms that had been introduced from Spain in the late nineteenth century, the zarzuela and the prose drama, became firmly implanted and indigenized as the *sarsuwela* and the *drama*. The drama, in what came to be called the "seditious plays" of the first decade, propelled Philippine theatre into modernity--dealing with contemporary life instead of faraway lands and peoples--into the realm of idea and not just narrative, and into nationalism, for the plays spoke not only of the Tagalog or the Cebuano, but of the Filipino and of what he should do, faced with a new colonizer. The Spanish zarzuela became the native musical and was crystallized into a definite genre by such writers as Severino Reyes, Mena Pecson Crisologo, Juan Crisostomo Soto, Valente Cristobal, and others in different regions. It was a theatre of domestic manners and mores, of love in different situations and at different levels. At this time, the borrowed forms journeyed much further into Philippine life by borrowing not only attitudes, but also events, situations, social conditions, contemporary manners and morals.

When the English language, which had been introduced with the educational system in 1901, had been learned widely enough to allow for some kind of audience, Philippine theatre in English started--school- and university-based, of course--and, aided by such competing entertainments as vaudeville and the movies, pushed back the komedyas, sinakulos, sarsuwelas, and dramas into the provinces, to be claimed almost exclusively by rural audiences at Holy Week and fiesta celebrations.

Early theatrical ventures in English were exercises in speaking the language: school dialogues, skits, and playlets; then plays from English, American, and European literature learned within the educational system; eventually plays written by the first Filipinos writing in English. By virtue of language and location, this theatre lost the farmers, housewives, vendors, fishermen, employees, and children who

had crowded to the komedyas and sarsuwelas of the early decades and now drew only an intellectual elite and the friends and relatives of the players and playwrights, captured by affection, moral suasion, and aggressive ticket-selling.

Even though the thirty years or so of Philippine theatre in English did produce the plays of Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero and Severino Montano, and Nick Joaquin's *Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (1951), as well as major directorial and acting talents who kept interest in theatre alive among principally urban audiences, the era can now be assessed as short-lived, merely transitional, and with an unfortunate alienating effect. It banished vernacular theatre to the provinces, where it immediately acquired an inferiority complex as "rural" and "provinciano" and therefore not for the educated. It separated the educated from the theatre tradition, such that for them the latter was not only distant, but indeed nonexistent, since their references were to Western theatre. The themes, trends, and samples of modern Western theatre, therefore, entered the Philippines and like orchids, flourished in the rarefied air of universities, theatre groups, and the intelligentsia without finding the fertile soil of a native tradition in which to set down roots.

Unity and Diversity

It was in the sixties that modern theatre trends were finally grounded in Philippine soil, and the particular Philippine response to modernization in the field of theatre became visible. The countries of Southeast Asia have this in common: their native theatre forms were born in the matrix of a history and society preceding Western contact and in most cases shaped on the anvil of Western conquest or colonization. Because their audiences are now exposed to education, mass media, global culture, and a new sense of time and space, these audiences have changed in character and expectation, and thus these theatres also have to change. They have to revitalize, update, change pace, change subject matter, adapt, acknowledge foreign methods and trends, not only if they wish to survive but if they wish to continue reaching audiences. This, Asian theatres have in common.

There is, however, a diversity in the ways in which they have faced the problem, in the perspectives with which they project solutions, and in the concrete ways in which they formulate answers in their contemporary theatres. Perhaps the Philippine response may be of interest, in that its effectivity and strength are born not only of the need to capture the modern audience but also of the necessity to respond to political urgency. It is a theatre mostly shaped in the shadow of Martial Law, called forth by turmoil, oppression, injustice, protest, and the need to speak about all this while under the direct threat of suppression.

Theatre in the Sixties

What kind of theatre evolved through these tortuous birth pangs? In the late sixties, when student activism served notice that the young

were impatient with and intolerant of injustice and corruption and were unwilling to wait for the social change so long in coming, the theatre left the walls of academe and the halls of English, taking to the streets and to the vernacular in order to communicate with the people it had long excluded.

Groups like the Kamanyang Players, Kalinangang Anak-Pawis, Panday-Sining, Gintong Silahis, and Tanghalang Bayan wrote, directed, and presented plays focusing directly on national problems: *Huwelga* (*Strike*), *Tunggalian* (*Conflict*), *Alay sa Anak-Pawis* (*Dedicated to the Sons of Labor*), *Pakikibaka* (*Struggle*), *Hukumang Tuwad* (*Mock Trial*), and others. These plays analyzed the problems caused by unjust social structures, feudalism, corruption, neo-colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, fascism, and other social evils. Performances were held in public plazas, community playgrounds, marketplaces, streets, factories, the steps of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (where "The Pest of Badway" was presented to counter the colonial mentality of "The Best of Broadway" within), and wherever else people congregated. Drama searched out its audience and spoke to them directly in their language, in theatre styles learned from Piscator, Brecht, and Chinese political theatre.

In the more conventional venues, the temper was changing as well. Where formerly the best theatre groups were so considered because they presented Shakespeare, Chekhov, or Arthur Miller in English,¹ the Ateneo de Manila's Dulaang Sibol, guided by Onofre Pagsanghan, had turned to the vernacular and had already produced the poetic realism of outstanding young playwrights Paul Dumol--*Ang Paglilitis ni Mang Serapio* (*The Trial of Old Serapio*) and *Puting Timamanukin* (*White Cock*)--and Tony Perez--*Hoy Boyet* (*Hey, Boyet*), *Sierra Lakes*, *Gabun*, and *Anak ng Araw* (*The Albino*).

The Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) was formed in 1967 by Cecile Guidote, who dreamed of a "national theatre" that would join and transcend regions. Its first presentation was Virginia Moreno's *Straw Patriot* (1956) in Pilipino translation, a play about agrarian problems and revolution.² PETA went on to do foreign plays in translation and adaptation as well as original Philippine plays, notably, in 1971, Isagani Cruz's modern sarsuwela, *Halimaw* (*Monster*), about a dictator who became king, tyrannical rule, conflicting ideologies, and social problems of the Philippines then with pointed contemporary references; and Marilou Jacob's and Franklin Osorio's *Ai Dao*, about the Muslim struggle in the South.

Even the yearly Palanca Literary Contest, which had been accused of breeding "filing cabinet drama" in plays that hardly ever were staged and were often well-nigh unstageable, brought forth in this period Rogelio Sikat's *Moses, Moses* (1968), about politicians and corruption and the unavailability of justice to the powerless; and Wilfrido Virtusio's *Vida* (1969) which, in a prison setting, juxtaposed the injustices in Philippine barrio and city slum, as crystallized in the lives of two prisoners.

This was the twilight of the eve of Martial Law.

The Early Seventies

After September 21, 1972, and the declaration of Martial Law, the loudly vocal stage was quiet for a while and the first voices to come forth were timid and hesitant.³ In 1973, the plays that came closest to making social statements were PETA's *Itay, Kain na Tayo* (*Father, Let Us Eat*), which addressed the population problem, having been commissioned by the NMPC to support the family planning campaign; and Babaylan's *Sinakulo* (*Passion Play*) at the Luneta, which contrasted traditional sinakulo scenes done by a Bulacan troupe with a modern version which "interpreted the passion of Christ in contemporary times as the suffering of religion at the hands of crass commercialism," in a blend of traditional chant, *pasyon* text, television jingles, popular song, city slang, and absurdist techniques.⁴

Two plays in 1974 pointed out so successfully the direction that plays could take in the Martial Law situation that they have since been performed again and again by different theatre groups in and out of Metro Manila. Rolando Tinio's *May Katuwiran ang Katuwiran* (*There is Reason to Reason*) is in the manner of Brecht's "learning play." In it a *kasama* (peasant) encounters a fleeing landlord and through conversation in and around various situations--building a raft, sharing a few pieces of bread---and songs making direct comment to the audience, the playwright explores "with ironic wit the dialectics of oppression and injustice."⁵

Orlando Nadres' *Paraisong Parisukat* (*Square Paradise*) has become a minor classic studied in playwriting workshops because of its structure and craftsmanship, presented by theatre groups of all sizes and persuasions, and even badly distorted in a movie version with popular stars and a hit theme song. Its main character, tellingly named Simplicia, is a shoe store employee, denizen of the little "square paradise" from which shoes of the required sizes and colors hurtle down a chute toward the sales floor. Her simple paradise, in which a gold loyalty medal symbolizes the limits of her ambition, is shattered by the serpent of knowledge when she realizes that she is exploited, has hardly any alternative to choose from, and faces a life of monotonous desperation.

Katuwiran was the sophisticated comment of an urbanite on the bleakness of the landlord-tenant situation and on the social structure and the mind-set that took it for granted. *Parisukat* was an often humorous but ultimately moving look at the urban worker, "the simple, the common, the unknown . . . the poor, the rude." A *kuwentong-masa* or tale for the masses, the author called it.⁶ Both showed that cogent social statement could be made and effectively communicated through the exploration of social fact, the kind that could be found in newspaper reports, government statistics, social work surveys, economic analyses, case studies, and the like. Given human faces and real emotions, these facts could speak with the same force that street theatre had, but with a new vocabulary, in the new dispensation. The "seditious" plays had hidden their intention behind metaphor and allegory; these found safety

in hard fact, in straight reality, in the incontrovertible, the undeniably true, which could set the audience asking: Why should this be so? Why has this not changed? Who is to blame? Are we to bear this forever? What should we do about it? Realism was not just a temper and a style learned from the West; it was demanded by the times, by the need to speak within changed circumstances in a changed voice.

Direction and Method

This has been the dominant trend in contemporary Philippine theatre, and it has moved steadily forward through Philippine social reality even as other directions have been explored: translations from Western theatre into Pilipino (Teatro Filipino); the latest on Broadway and London's West End (Repertory Philippines); dinner theatre (various groups abetted by the profit-seeking hotels); development theatre (plays about family planning, vegetable growing, and the like funded and/or sponsored by government agencies); revivals; experimentation with other theatre trends and styles like the absurd, psychological realism, puppets, children's theatre, and so on.

Social realism was imperative at a time when news was controlled, all comment was guarded, the threat of detention was immediate and real, and people had to be made to see that all was not ideal behind the spanking-clean streets and the burgeoning infrastructure. The thing to remember, indeed, is that the impelling force, the motive impulse behind a theatre that, while perennially impoverished, is alive and well, is Martial Law.

The 1975 plays showed that this exploration would be effectively done through historical matter. Domingo Landicho's *Unang Alay* (*First Offering*), staged in the hall of a Jesuit retreat house, was about Andres Bonifacio's and his wife's "first offering" to the revolution--their child's death--a sacrifice of personal grief to national need. Fernando Josef's *Ang Tao . . . Hayop o Tao* (*Man . . . Beast or Human*) was about the 85-year Dagohoy revolt in Bohol, in which the victim is brutalized by oppression, since "man's being more TAO than HAYOP or vice-versa depends primarily on the kind of existence he has to contend with."⁷ Rosauro de la Cruz's *Ang Unang Pagtatanghal ng "Ang Huling Pasyon ni Hermano Pule"* (*The First Staging of "The Last Passion of Brother Pule"*) examined still another peasant movement, that of Apolinario de la Cruz in Tayabas. Al Santos' *Si Tatang atbp mga Tauhan ng Aming Dula* (*Old Father and Other Characters in Our Play*) dealt with more recent history. In 1967 Valentin de los Santos led the Lapiang Malaya in a charge against Philippine Constabulary guns armed with faith and *anting-anting* (amulets) that did not save them from massacre. Tatang de los Santos, whose life story the play rebuilds through improvisations and pantomime, is "Valentin de los Santos . . . is Hermano Pule, Papa Isio, Apo Ipe . . . any one of the Pulahanes of Leyte, Dios-Dios of Samar, etc. Tatang therefore is the symbolic embodiment of all . . . [these] people . . . From Hermano Pule of 1840 to Valentin de los Santos of 1967 we trace a thread that binds them together."⁸

In the same year, Mauro Avena's *Sakada* (*Migrant Worker*) explored the lives of the migrant workers on sugarcane plantations hired for the

milling season from Antique and Cebu and exploited by contractors and planters. Nonilon Queaño's *Alipato (Sparks)* built onstage a community of racketeers, thieves, prostitutes, drunks, and dregs trying to survive. Manuel Pambid's *Buhay Batilyo, Hindi Kami Susuko (Batilyo Life: We Will Not Give In)* took the audience to the fishing ports of Malabon and Navotas, where *batilyos* drag the basins of fish from the barges to the selling area and, having the status of casual workers, are at the mercy and whim of the fishing magnates and their wives. Reuel Aguila's *Anak ni Bonifacio (Son of Bonifacio)* examined the struggle of a community of urban poor against a land-greedy landowner.⁹

Material from the Rizal novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, which although literature is authentic enough to be taken by most Filipinos as history, worked just as effectively. Still in 1975, Paul Dumol's *Kabesang Tales (Headman Tales)* showed, in a work of masterly writing and innovative structure (some twenty-six scenes of varying lengths; no division into acts), how oppression can push even a patient farmer and father beyond the limits of endurance; and Rosauro de la Cruz's *Mga Misteryo ng Hapis ni Sisa (The Mysteries of the Suffering of Sisa)* bared once again the motive forces behind Sisa's despair and eventual madness.

By the mid-seventies, therefore, the thrust and directions of contemporary Philippine drama had become definite: injustice, oppression, poverty, corruption, and all the other ills flesh is heir to in the concrete present are analyzed, examined, questioned, anguished over, and solutions quietly sought and suggested. Explorations of the self and of personal angst; the spinning of webs of imagination; the wandering into allied or alien cultures--these were occasionally ventured, but they were luxuries, almost self-indulgence. The present had too much urgency. It pressed on the playwright's consciousness too insistently. He had to respond.

His responses have produced a body of theatrical works that exceed in number, and definitely in relevance and quality, the total work of the thirty years or so of theatre in English. The work of the last ten years is only exceeded in number by the sum total of the works of folk theatre of all the regions, from 1609 (the date of the first recorded religious drama in a native language) to the present. Certainly current theatre in the last decade--even if one only counts Metro Manila--has had more impact, been more significant to Philippine life and thought, than theatre has ever been since pre-Hispanic times.

Into the Eighties

Some of the more significant theatre events of the second half of the decade have been the following. In 1976, Lito Tiongson wrote and directed *Ang Walang Kamatayang Buhay ni Juan de la Cruz Alyas . . . (The Unending Life of Juan de la Cruz, Alias . . .)*. With the Philippine-American War as background, the play shows the invincibility of Juan de la Cruz who, as street sweeper, servant in an *ilustrado*

(elite) household, peasant farmer, captain, man on the street, and revolutionary general, survives "the American imposition of martial law, curfew, zoning, reconcentration, and torture," as well as, it is suggested, present and future analogous events.¹⁰ Staged at the Rajah Sulayman theatre in the open air under a full moon, with a singer up on the ramparts accompanying his nationalist songs on a guitar, the moments were not only true theatre but often magic.

In the same year, four experiments with theatrical style pointed the way for the survival of traditional theatre forms and the creation of new ones. Amelia Lapeña Bonifacio's *Ang Paglalakbay ni Sisa* (*The Journeying of Sisa*) drew again from Rizal's *Noli*, this time to explore the anguish of both tormentor and victim--Fray Salvi and Sisa--in a style deriving from Noh drama. The chants, however, were stylized *pasyon* chant (Christ's passion in verse chanted during Lent), and in the keening one heard an authentic native anguish.¹¹ The same author's *Ang Bundok* (*The Mountain*) suggested what might be done with the traditional *sarsuwela*.¹² It presented the expected love story but this time in the context of tribal crisis, with a mountain people seeking to safeguard their mine-rich lands from gold-seeking foreigners. The play focuses not on the resolution of the love story but upon the decision of the community to stand together against aggression.

Domingo Landicho revived the *duplo* (verbal joust), but although his *Dupluhang Bayan* kept the verse and the accusation-defense pattern and even the humor, high fooling was no longer the purpose. Instead of *bilyakos* and *bilyakas*, *manggagawa* (workers) and *magsasaka* (farmers) received the standard opening accusation: "Who stole the king's *kulasisi* [pet birds, also a euphemism for mistress or girlfriend]?" The defenses turned to discussions and to questioning, with illustrations drawn from legend, folklore, and history. The game vanishes in the realization that worker and farmer are being pitted against each other by the powerful and that much can be gained by unity:

Tangi ninyong dalit ay pamamanginoon
At kami ang bayan na ibinabaon
Sa dustang libingan ng dusa't linggatong.
Ngunit bayan ay gising na,
Sa buking liwayway ng aming pag-asa.

Your plaint is of servitude
And we are the nation buried
In poverty and suffering.
But the nation is now awake
In the dawning of our hope.

The nation is awake and hope dawns.

A new form was confirmed by Rizalina Valencia's *Iskolar ng Bayan* (*The Nation's Scholar*) (1976) and *Juan Obrero* (*Juan the Worker*) (1977).

Called the *dula-tula* or play-poem, it was conceived by the U.P. Repertory Company under the direction of Behn Cervantes, out of poverty and the need for portability. Jose F. Lacaba's poem, "Ang Mga Kagilagilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Juan de la Cruz" ("The Astounding Adventures of Juan de la Cruz") (1971) had been dramatized in 1975 with just three actors: a narrator, a principal who played Juan, and a "common man" who played all the other roles with a minimum of props and costumes. Juan de la Cruz, empty of pocket, runs up against all manner of social and official institutions and finally, in desperation, takes to the mountains, while the student activists are blamed "kung bakit sinulsulan / ang isang tahimik na mamamayan / na tulad ni Juan de la Cruz" (for inciting / goading a quiet citizen like Juan de la Cruz).

Valencia's *Iskolar ng Bayan* conducted a similar exposition for the student up against university bureaucracy and red tape, teachers defending turfs and reputations, and government and university officialdom and policy. It is still staged frequently at the University of the Philippines for wildly applauding students and faculty. *Juan Obrero* confirmed the viability of the form by taking up the workingman's plight--no training, no opportunities, social restrictions, injustice from top and middle men. *Dula-tula* is Third World theatre, minimal in cost, light in touch, shading from rueful irony to wild absurdity, accommodating the verse form native to Philippine drama, flexible in casting and staging, and direct in effect.

Certainly the major theatrical event of 1977 was Bonifacio Ilagan's *Pagsambang Bayan* (*The Nation's Worship*), which dramatized a mass. Following the structure of the liturgy, it takes a congregation--workers, farmers, youth, ethnic groups--and the priest through dance, song, movement, and verse into the realization of what a mass, what indeed worship, liturgy, religion, should be:

Ang mensahe ng liturhiya ay pagpapalaya. Ang *pagpapalaya* ay hndi nararapat na kulungin sa espiritwal na antas, sapagka't kung magkakaganuon, ang relihiyon at Simbahan ay tunay na magiging landas lamang sa pagtakas sa katotohanan, at pagpapatangay sa agos ng "kapalaran." Ang *pagpapalaya* ay kailangang sumaklaw sa araw-araw na buhay ng mga tao, sa sarili nilang kapaligiran at panahon . . . ang papel ng Simbahan, sa pamamagitan ng Ministry niya ay mabisa lamang nitong pagagampanan kung siya ay bababa, makikisalamuha, at makikisangkot sa buhay-at-kamatayang pakikibaka ng sambayanan.¹³

The message of liturgy is liberation. Nor should liberation be limited to the spiritual plane, because then religion and the Church would truly become only ways to escape from the truth, or to drift with the current of "fate." Liberation necessarily has to include man's daily life, his own and actual environment

and era . . . the ministry of the Church can only be effectively fulfilled if it descends from the heights, joins, and involves itself in the life-and-death struggles of the nation.

The director, Behn Cervantes, used staging reminiscent of street theatre but with areas and movements cleanly delineated and as eloquent as words. The mass-likeness was heightened by readings participated in by the audience, collections taken up for particular causes, singing, and some kind of communion ritual for audience and actors. The play has since been staged several times and has drawn electric response. After its first run at the University of the Philippines and other school auditoriums, it was mentioned in an international news magazine, which commented on the directness of its message. This resulted in the writer being called for questioning and in a second term in detention camp for the director.

1978 was notable for still more statements through history and still more plays by Bonifacio Ilagan. His *Katipunan* (the name of a revolutionary society of the revolution against Spain) was staged twice in the same year in different versions: at the CCP End Room for intimate theatre and at the University of the Philippines, where it was retitled *Sigaw ng Bayan (The Nation's Cry)*. Andres Bonifacio and the revolution have been the subjects of a large number of plays in the last few years, usually with fresh views of the motives, leadership, and mass action that ended Spanish rule, as well as with equally fresh insights into oppression, the patience of impatience of a people waiting for change, the motives that spark decisive action, and the ways and meaning of revolution.

Also in this year there were further dramatic inquiries into Philippine society. Al Santos' rock opera, *Sa Bundok ng Apo (On Mount Apo)* (music by Jose Ayala, Jr.), has a Bagobo tribe defending ancestral lands against land-grabbing lowlanders. *Halik sa Kampilan (Sabre's Kiss)* was adapted by Frank Rivera into a fiery exposé of the many-sided Muslim problem in Mindanao. Nonilon Queaño's *Ang Magsasaka (The Farmer)* was a grim portrayal of poverty and oppression in the barrio, where, the author suggested, change can only come from the young who ask questions and fight back. Reuel Aguila's *In Dis Corner (In This Corner)* looked into boxing, fight-fixing, and the exploitation and disillusionment of a young boxer. Rene Villanueva's *Burles (Burlesque)* took the audience to a seamy burlesque theatre and to the seamier exploitation--financial and sexual--backstage.

It is difficult to say which was the most significant play of 1979. Marilou Jacob's *Juan Tambo* probably drew the largest audiences, even without big names and with little more than word-of-mouth publicity. The idea for the play had come from a news report of a boy found eating lizards, cockroaches, and mice. An inquiry into the facts produced a play about a world of dire poverty, hunger, and ripe conditions for crime juxtaposed against the structures of government agencies and

officialdom, finally focusing on a one-on-one relationship between the child and the social worker who takes him on as "case" and finds instead herself and their common humanity.

Clearly a landmark, and possessed of the most moments of pure theatre, was PETA's *May-i, May-i*, written by Al Santos and Marilou Jacob after a synopsis prepared by the late Emmanuel Lacaba between 1971 and 1973 for a projected trilogy on pre-Spanish Philippines. The play explores a conflict between a native community led by Panday Pira, which functioned through communal work and sharing, and a feudal community with classes and slaves, led by Rajah Matanda and Lakandula. Two young leaders, Rajah Sulayman and Magat Salamat, clash in both ideology and love but later unite against the invading Spaniards and against the old rulers, who have entered into a blood compact with the invaders. The play posited a tradition of resistance to foreign aggression. Its ending, with Manila burning and warriors clashing in a dim past, lit up the night, as did the new dramatic idiom fashioned by PETA and director Lutgardo Labad from mime, dance, native martial arts, historic ritual, and language to convey the feel and character of an untouched, pre-Hispanic Philippine world.

One should mention, too, Al Santos' *Juan Tamad vs. Paltos V*, written for the Metropolitan Theatre, a comic take-off on the Voltes V robot TV shows then popular with Filipino children. In this musical, distantly related to the sarsuwela, the despotic chief of a mythical barangay uses Japanese-made robots to impress and terrorize his people. Juan Tamad, the lazy rogue of Philippine folklore, becomes a reluctant, almost accidental hero who shows the people that they can solve their problems together, without robots or despots. The melding of folklore, popular culture, music, and a meaningful idea in an entertaining package for children suggested still another method for a thinking theatre.

Certainly trailblazing as well was the PETA *Panumuluyan*, written by Alan Glinoga, Al Santos, and Rody Vera, in which the folk dramatization of Joseph and Mary's search for an inn was imaginatively updated. Down they came from a *carroza* blazing with lights and angels to search for shelter in Manila among landlords, society matrons, industrial bigwigs, and crowds of shoppers. Meeting the elite as well as vendors, squatters, tenants, workers, and street urchins, they find that they and the poor are rejected, just as in Judea of old. The PETA *Panumuluyan* crystallized and professionalized what has actually been happening to some of the folk religious dramas that are, or once were, so central to barrio and town life: revitalization for a modern audience, one immersed in current problems, with a different view of religion and changed perceptions of theatre.

In the eighties, the thrust persists. Plays venture into the family life of a union leader (*Katulad ni Itay* [Just Like Father] by Rody Vera); the inadequate salaries of teachers, which force them to moonlight and thus neglect to teach themselves further (Al Santos' *Sistema ni Tuko* [Tuko's Ways]); the pitfalls for provincianos who come to the city looking for dream castles (*Palasyong Pangarap* [Palace of

Dreams] by Vic Eduave and Rene Javellana); the bureaucracy that denies a retired teacher his rightful pension and his dreams (Aida Carmona's *Mr. Prudente Servicio, Retirado*); the bleak life of workers in the coconut industry, and the hopes pinned on a job in "Saudi," which are met by betrayal and bitterness (Reuel Aguila, *Mapait na Bao* [*Bitter Coconut*]); the way a lake is shrunk by a rich man's fish-pens, edging the fishermen toward despair, starvation and violence (Dong de los Reyes' *Daungan . . . Laot . . . Daungan* [*Anchorage on the High Seas*]); the lives behind four lonely old men in a home for the aged, a pathetic chorus of struggle, oppression, poverty (Rene Villanueva, *Hiblang Abo* [*Grey Hair*])¹⁴; the comic but sadly absurd life of soldiers blindly obeying uncomprehended and ultimately meaningless missions (Tony Perez, *Bombita*, 1981).

A definite stand-out in 1982 would be Nicanor Tiongson's *Filipinas Circa 1907*, with which the sarsuwela of the first decades of the century bounces back on stage, flirtatious and romantic and fulfilled as ever while conducting a sharp-eyed examination of some thorny truths in Philippine-American relationships and attitudes.

Theatre of Communion

Drama is definitely the "premier literary form" of this time in Philippine history, more active and lively than any other form.¹⁵ Theatre is vocal and vital in today's Philippines. This is clear, even though we are still faced with the task of studying, examining, and documenting theatre outside the theatre buildings of Metro Manila--in the provinces, in church groups, in tribal villages, in factories, and in farming and fishing communities where it also lives and has meaning.

Even without a professional theatre--no one can live on theatre in our Third World, underdeveloped, suffering country--theatre thrives. Because it must. It is one of the few ways to speak about, analyze, and indirectly criticize what is wrong. It has to replace many voices that have been stilled. It has to alert the young, who, having been children before 1972, have never known a different clime and time. It has to speak to their elders, to the old, that they may not lose hope or energy. And, being theatre, it has to be true to itself and be pleasure, be art, be creation. Philippine contemporary theatre does all this, while being creative and pleasurable and, very often, art.

This is theatre of communion, once again community-born, bent, centered, and directed. The community is larger now, no longer tribe or even region, but nation.

As mentioned in the beginning, perhaps the most important thing to remember about Philippine theatre in the last decade is that it was staged and written, and flourishes, in a dictatorship. Its urgency and courage are what give it the bite of truth.

NOTES

1. Many of the productions were more than competent; some were even excellent according to the standards of those times. However, because the language was not native and was comparatively new, not all actors had the proper diction and intonation and much of the audience's perception of a play was too often of the quality of the actors' English rather than of the core of the playwright's concern.
2. *Bayaning Huwad*, 1967, trans. by Wilfredo Pascua Sanchez.
3. In 1972, in the months after the declaration of Martial Law, only three plays were staged: the rock opera *Tommy*, *West Side Story in Rock* (both in November), and Father James B. Reuter's, *Gift of Love* (December), all at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.
4. Nicanor G. Tiongson, "PETA and BABAYLAN: Two Steps Down from the Ivory Tower of Miseducation," *Manila Paper* I (February 1975), p. 9. The Babaylan Theatre Group was formed for the express purpose of researching, reviving, and revitalizing traditional theatre forms.
5. Bienvenido Lumera, "Philippine Theatre Since 1972," unpublished manuscript, 1979, pp. 29-30.
6. Orlando Nadres, introduction to *Para'isong Parisukat*, June 23, 1974.
7. Fernando Josef, "Directorial Notes," *Ang Tao . . . Hayop o Tao*, Theatre Program, PETA, November 1975.
8. Lito Tiongson, "Director's Diary," *Si Tatang atbp mga Tauhan ng Aming Dula*, Theatre Program, PETA, October 1975.
9. Nicanor B. Cleto's *Higaang Marmol*, 1975, is also about the landless urban poor. The author's introduction expresses the concern and motivation of many of his fellow playwrights: "Ni isang kutsarang lupa ay walang maangking kanila ang mga taong ito. Sila ang mga taong walang tahanan kundi ang nagkikintabang marmol ng sementeryo. Sila ang mga kaluluwang itinaboy sa kanilang mga tahanan dahil sa sila'y madungis tingnan, sagabal sa beautification projects at nakakailang sa mata ng mga turistang nagpapasyal./Subali't ang trahedya ng kanilang buhay ay hindi lamang kanila, pagkat sa isang higit na mataas na antas ng pagsusuri, ang uod na kumakain sa kanilang laman ay siya ring uod na ngumangatngat sa ating laman. Iisa ang ating trahedya." [Not even a spoonful of earth can these people call their own. They have no homes except the shining marble of cemeteries. They are souls rejected because they look dirty, do not enhance beautification projects, and might offend the eyes of strolling tourists./But the tragedy of their lives is not theirs alone, because in a higher level of analysis, the worm that eats at their flesh also gnaws on ours. We have a common tragedy.] Translation by this writer.

10. Nicanor G. Tiongson, "Towards Our Own National Theatre," *The Review* 4 (February 1981): 45.
11. The play later inspired a modern ballet, *Sisa* (1974), choreographed by Cora Iñigo for the CCP Dance Company.
12. Music by Fabian Obispo, Jr. and Rodolfo de Leon.
13. Bonifacio Ilagan, "Buod ng Dula," *Pagsambang Bayan*, Theatre Program, U.P. Repertory Company, August 1977. Translation is by this writer.
14. All the above plays were staged in 1980.
15. Lumbera, "Philippine Theatre Since 1972," p. 19.

A Heritage of Defeat:

Hill Tribes Out of China

Lucien M. Hanks

We are far from the first to observe a heritage of defeat among hill tribes in Southeast Asia. Jones observed tales of defeat among the Lahu in Thailand; Roux found parallels in Laos among the Akha; Dessaint among the Lisu, of Northern Thailand. The following excerpt summarizes the tale, as the late Harold Young collected it from the Lahu of the China-Burma border area:

When the Lahu heard what had happened to their sacred seal, they were greatly alarmed, and again looked to their dreamers (pawka) for advice. This time little encouragement was given. The dreamers consulted together for seven days and seven nights, then called the people together and addressed them: "We have lost our chances three times. The first time we lost our city of Mong Myen because our women bartered the triggers [of the crossbows] for mouth harps. The second time we lost our writing, that was given by Heaven, because of the faithless novice. Now for the last time we have lost our sacred seal, which bestowed such benefits upon us, through the foolishness of one who would woo the daughters of strangers. The forest tree has fallen from rot within the trunk." They prophesied that the Lahu would never again become a ruling race but would be subordinated to others, wherever they lived, and that they would have to provide themselves with a thick piece of buffalo hide to place upon their shoulders while they served others."¹

Of course this extract comes from a longer tale once told as a quasi-history of the tribe.

As to tribal histories, we are struck with their humiliation. Most other people tell triumphal tales of their heroes. Hiawatha, David, Babur, Siegfried, and Abe Lincoln succeeded in their missions. Even disappointing failures like Richard the Lion-Hearted are fluffed up--by overlooking his defeat in the crusade, his being waylaid en route home disguised as a pilgrim, and his subsequent capture by enemies who released him only after he had abandoned his claims to lands and titles. Unlike these proud people, the uplanders whom we encountered wish to explain their humble residence in the hills, their illiteracy and other perceived shortcomings.

Good fortune brought us in touch with a number of tribal people of northern Thailand in an area of Chiangrai province on the Burma border. There Lahu, Lisu, and Akha dwelt, represented by many villages, who accept this tale of defeat as their own. Let us ask what has led these people to share this attitude. As we shall be exploring the setting of each of these tribes in Chinese history and could anticipate reviewing tribal wars, it seemed desirable to include the Yao of our hill region in the horizon of our inquiry. Not only did they too migrate from China, fight years of battle with the Chinese, but uniquely they lacked the tale of defeat.

In seeking to explain what may be called an ethnic anomaly, the passing of tales of defeat to younger generations, our first section searches out peculiarities of these four tribes that may be observed by ethnographers. Then we shall turn to the Chinese *Book of Southern Barbarians* (*Man Shu*) for information on the relations between peoples on the frontier prior to Chinese expansion.² A third section examines the history of all four tribes for possible cities lost in battle and other occasions for stress. Finally we shall weigh the importance of ethnic tradition in societal events along the borders of south China.

The Tribes In Their Contemporary Setting

Our acquaintance with the four tribes of central concern grew from a survey of the aforementioned hill tract in northern Thailand. It is about the area of the island of Kauai. In 1964 the population had reached some 12,000 people, producing a density of 10.3 per square mile. This population was scattered among 120 tribal villages, each with an average of 12 houses and 110 people. For food and warmth these villages were nearly self-sufficient. In shifting cultivation they raised their own rice, vegetables, and fibres; they manufactured their own implements, wove cotton and hemp fabric for their clothing. To get iron, salt, and a few pots in the lowland markets, they made annual visits trading chiefly cotton, opium, peppers, and such forest products as honey, medicinal herbs, and animal and snake skins.

Villages were known by the tribal group to which they belonged. Each tribe had its own favorite type of village site on the mountain, its own language and costume. The various tribal peculiarities of architecture, village lay-out, path-making, and so on became familiar

enough that a single glance sufficed to identify the tribe. In 1964 the predominant tribe with its fifty villages was Akha, who first came from Kengtung in 1918. Lahu villages in the area at that time reached forty, many of them sheltering descendants from villages first described by missionaries in the 1890s. The Lisu had ten villages, two of them with more than fifty houses; their first village came about 1927 from the China-Burma border region. As for the Yao, they also had ten villages, all of them from Laos in the aftermath of World War II.

Let us consider four general tensions in the lives of these people: isolation, fear of coercive power, anticipation of upland decline, and low self-esteem. First, though they live in small villages, many voice preferences for living in more populous villages. Ask any tribesman what is the best time of the year. All reply without hesitation, "New Year." New Year is a time of revitalizing. It begins after the rice harvest with the new moon of December or January. Ancestors are invited to return from the land of the dead, are fed and entertained with dances for several days. If the year has been good, everyone wears new clothes and eats unstintingly. Everyone in the big or little village is together; no one moves off to isolated work in the forest or fields. For a few glorious days all remain together in sociable gaiety until the ancestors are requested to return to the land of the dead and protect the living for another year.

This moment of gregarious delight contrasts with the isolation of most villages. During the decades of the 1940s and 1950s, flights from political disturbances in Burma and Laos occurred. Only in isolation did the villagers feel safe, free from bandits, soldiers, and other passing threats. Our hill tract then had few villages, hence few trails; no better place to come. Anyone at his work in the vicinity of the village was obliged to send someone running to warn the village should he sight strangers approaching. In a very few minutes no one remained in the village, and strangers would pass along quietly or help themselves to whatever they saw. With a touch of spite they could set the village on fire, the single most malicious act that could be performed, for it leaves the villagers to begin again with little more of their assets than can be found among the rubble.

Despite these threats to security, isolation takes its toll. Occasional householders in villages of half a dozen houses spoke of hoping to move to larger villages where more was taking place. Once on a trail a Yao sang a song which he later paraphrased: "From my door I watch travellers approaching. Will they enter [our village] or pass by? If they enter, we shall kill a pig and dance. If they pass by, my heart must endure the disappointment." So tribal people seem to live with an ambivalence toward other people that is more acute than among most other frontier people. The openhanded hospitality of the American West is absent.

In the course of the population survey, it was frequently painful to ask a headman about the number of households that had departed from his village. A headman prided himself on the number of households in

his village, and diminution constituted a loss of face. It also indicated a problem in management which he had been unable to remedy. Many villages are only held together by the diplomatic skill of the leader, for, having settled outstanding debts, any household is free to depart, and knows that other headmen will welcome a newcomer. So an adverse decision on the extent of a debt or the reparation that must be made when livestock damage a growing field may send away the aggrieved with half a dozen sympathizers. Though advising elders recognize the need in making decisions to restore village harmony, waiting for a consensus is not always possible, and headmen may have to act on their own. Some villages show the strain where a succession of headmen have resigned leaving an ineffective person in office because no one wishes to assume the tasks.

Clearly we are dealing with the second tension, a fear of coercive power among people who may have become touchy individualists. All tribesmen yearn for security but hesitate to grant another person arbitrary authority over their lives. Authority is heightened when a headman is wealthy or derives increased support as an elder kinsman. As a result it is rare in these hills to find a man whose influence extends beyond his village, and in these few cases no headman of a dependent village wishes to acknowledge dependence. Only on short-lived occasions when reciprocity could be clearly demonstrated did two or more villages join together to open a new trail or to hunt a threatening tiger. Persons do exist who declare themselves King of the Yao,³ and we have heard references to a King of Miao (Hmong), but their reigns based on opium wealth were brief. A Yao government occupying a Kafka-like stronghold does exist with titled officials, magistrates, and their servants who operate courts and pass sentences, but it is not of this world. It is mythical. So these tribes yearn for justice, safety of property and person, without being able to achieve it. The nearest they have come to it has been with rulers of other ethnic backgrounds such as the Saobwas of the Shan states.

Our third tension emerges when tribesmen of the hills in search of independence sense themselves as the poor of the world they know. Telford illustrates this point in a Lahu priest's address to reconcile the soul of a deceased to the inevitability of death:

"At the beginning of time, when Ca Nu Ca Peh did not listen to G'uisha's word, sickness and death came into the world. . . . Look at the Chinaman as he rides his mule. He travels from one end of the country to the other but he, too, must die when the lord of death touches him. Look again and see that prosperous Shan, living happily in his tile-roofed house. The death water has not touched him yet, still though [*sic*] he now sits on his silk carpets, the time will come when he will sicken and die."⁴

To these advantaged Chinese and Shan, let us add the lowland Thai, who have also built monuments and accumulated wealth well beyond upland

capacities. Though there are tribesmen whose affluence excels 95 percent of the lowland villagers, both the substantive and potential wealth of the uplands is smaller.

One serious limitation arises from upland mobility. Though fields rotated in five-year cycles can sustain indefinitely a village situated near fertile soil, attitudes of uplanders face in the other direction. For instance, the Yao at Nawng Waen moved in 1962 from the uplands to a lowland site where they developed wet-rice fields and sent their children to a nearby school. We thought they would remain there indefinitely. A decade later these padi-field owners were back clearing fields from the forest. It was more fun than plowing with a water buffalo, they said. After fifteen years they moved to a new village elsewhere. Indeed, decline begins in most villages soon after jubilant settling into sparkling new houses. Fields give out after a year or two; firewood becomes more inaccessible; the game moves away; people move to escape sickness. The Akha, sensing the need for renewal, often move their villages--the most arduous aspect of moving--a few hundred yards from the old site. In a fixed setting life is threatened with decay. Compelled by attitude and circumstance to mobility, the uplanders deem themselves fated to be poor.

We have already commented on the apologetic version of history; now let us move a step further to speak of the fourth tension, a weak tradition. More confident people, those with stronger traditions, would have repressed or altered their tales of failure. Similarly, a strong tradition preempts the stage, like the Navajo calling themselves "men" and implying that all others are inferior creatures of another kind. To our knowledge only the Yao or "Yu Mien" are a kind of "people," but the fact that both are Chinese loanwords takes away the sharp edge. Similarly "Lisu" is the adoption of the word used by Chinese to describe the tribe. We lack data on the meaning of "Akha" and "Lahu" as terms for those people, but we remember that American Indians rarely, if ever, label themselves with an English, Spanish, or French word. Moreover, tribal people of our acquaintance acknowledge living among people of differing customs and language. Relations between villages of differing tribes may be stiff or aloof, but no one hesitates on ethnic grounds to welcome strangers or adopt children of other tribes. A tribally divergent household or two may be found in many villages; there may be a Lisu among Lahu, a lone Chinese almost anywhere, some married to tribal women. The Lahushi Bakio, a Lahu subdivision, require tribal exogamy, and these tribally divergent wives in their native costumes add color to evening dances. Christian converts, however, are excluded from residence in most villages and so form their own.

One may infer from the foregoing examples that strength (or weakness) of a tradition reflects the ethnocentric conviction (or uncertainty) of the bearers. Of these tribes the Akha are the strongest, the Lahu the weakest, and Yao stronger than Lisu.

As all of the ethnic groups under study came from China, the Yao from Kwangtung, the Akha, Lahu, and Lisu from western Yunnan, let us

examine their past in the context of Chinese history. Since they have no written records of the past, we must look for the circumstances that may have given these tribes their peculiarities. Why do they both isolate themselves and chafe in their isolation? Why do they reject authority but complain of insecurity? What has led to their acceptance of the low status assigned by lowland people? What in their past could have weakened their pride in their ethnic traditions?

The Barbarians of China

The emperor was governor of all under heaven. When he looked reverentially upward from the sacred mountain to pay respect to the heavens and looked tenderly down to govern the people wisely and justly, all his subjects lived in peace, providing one more condition was fulfilled. The people governed must respect their king and each other according to status. From the Confucian Analects (iii 26), Hughes translated into English the essence of an empire based on morality: "The possession of high station without generosity, the conduct of ritual without reverence, the discharge of mourning duties without grief, these are things I cannot bear to see."⁵ When all rites and meetings transpire with genuine sincerity, their objectives will be achieved.

States rest on many pillars, but often one of them is deemed more important than the others. Some, like Assyria, Sparta, and Alexander's empire, rested largely on power. There are also wealth-centered states like Holland and Switzerland that cherish a rich life over power, but China was one of the few that emphasized morality.

In effect the Chinese considered themselves the sole people capable of operating a system based on morality for making not only China, but the world, orderly and peaceful. As the Middle Kingdom, center of the world, they looked out from their island of order on the turbulent and disorderly seas that lay on all sides beyond the barrier reef. There lived people who in varying degrees misunderstood or were ignorant of the lessons of the Chinese classics. The measure of moral progress became the degree to which an outlying people could build a state and its similarity to the Chinese state. Among the more advanced peoples along the southern borderland they saw reasonably extensive kingdoms like Ai Lao of Han times and Nan Chao of T'ang and Sung times. Benevolent emperors received their tribute with genuine delight, bore their grief patiently when tribute lapsed, and punished with righteous anger the evil ones who rebelled.

Essentially the task was a conversion, if not a metamorphosis, of barbarians to Chinese. Indeed, the task, as Nora Waln described it in the 1920s, was to replace non-Chinese with Chinese traditions. Nora Waln was the daughter of an American family that had been trading partners with the Lin family in China for more than a century. They had watched the days in passage decrease as sailing ships moved faster and eventually gave way to propeller-driven craft. When she accepted

an invitation to visit the Lins, she was pleasantly received into the familial enclave, but she was treated more like a street urchin than a proud graduate of an American university: Her occidental clothes were taken away; she was thoroughly bathed, dressed in Chinese attire, and her hair rearranged to a style suitable for Chinese girls of her age. After being instructed in bowing and the precise number of times to refuse a cup of tea, she was led to the grandmother for an icy reception. After the meeting, "Kuei-tzu, Lady of First Authority in the [dwelling named] House of Exile, gave the command that I was not to be presented to audience again until I was sufficiently civilized to hear and speak for myself and no member of the family was again to speak with me in any language but Chinese."⁶ A year later she was deemed sufficiently prepared to pay a second visit to grandmother and was welcomed to live on in China.

To bring Chinese peace and order to the thousands of barbarians in the south required centuries and has not yet been fully completed, despite great progress during the past millennium. A glance at the scene in the late 800s reveals something of the task. The kingdom of Nan Chao, as already noted, was one of the most advanced, according to a report by Fan Ch'o, an official sent to determine why this nearly civilized state had given up sending tribute to the Sung Emperor. He wrote:

Yang-chu-mieh city is the main palace of the Nan-chao. It goes up several storeys. To the left and right also there are streets. The road is raised over 20 feet high. As for masonry, they use granite for the stone steps. In front of the palace there is (an open space), 2 or 3 li square. North and south the city gates face each other. . . . Below the palace one is on the edge of a clear lake. Behind the Great Hall there is the Small Hall. Behind it, there is the private residence of the Nan-chao. . . .⁷

These various kings and princes had yet to learn the importance of filial respect, as shown by the many bloody wars in which they were engaged, yet many were approaching a minimum level of rectitude.

In the fringe of these major centers ranged a series of lesser kingdoms like one called Shih Man:

They were originally a tribal clan of Wu Man northwest of T'ieh-ch'iao (Iron Bridge). . . . The men make plain trousers of silk. The women part their hair across from the top of the head, and both on their forehead and behind the top of the head they dress a hair knot. . . . They also go barefoot and wear sheep-skins. The lord of the tribe and the Ch'eng Shang have both been granted

pseudo-appointment as Wang [prince] by the Tibetans. In 794 Nan Chao attacked their cities and villages, and took prisoner their prince, Hsun-lo, together with his family and clan, and settled them at Meng-she city, providing them with food.⁸

Evidently, this tribe, once on its own, had gained recognition and protection for its cities and villages from Tibet, but Tibet was unable to thwart the growing power of Nan Chao. These people were reduced to vassals who lived in the vicinity of their conqueror.

There were also tribes with their own chiefs who may have lived only in clusters of villages, and they, like the P'u-tze Man, were affiliated with a prince:

They are brave, fierce, nimble and active. With a blue piece of silk-cotton they make trousers to pass over the body. . . . Their tribal chieftains they call chiu, which means "superior." They have no eating utensils: they use plantain-leaves for the purpose. . . . Your humble servant's superior officer, Ts'ai Hsi, (Jan 25th, 863) on the battle front captured alive some P'u-tze Man. When examined under flogging, none of them said a word. When their wrists were severed, they also made no sound.⁹

Fan Ch'o further named a man said to be a member of the P'u-tze tribe who had been designated county magistrate by the prince of the area. The prince, needing these people for his armies, brought their chiefs into the management of his realm. Were the tribes known to us today in Thailand participants in this scene with their present resources, they would at best have served on a level with these P'u-tze.

Somewhere beyond these uncountable, undefinable tribes were also the unaffiliated. Fearing attacks and being taken prisoner, they lived remotely on nearly impassable trails which Fan Ch'o preferred not to follow. Some of them may have resembled the Wa of the Shan states who grew better crops and felt more at ease with the world after severing heads from the bodies of foreigners.

Unfortunately, significant details escape us in our quest for knowledge of the organization of the tribes, their habitat, their mode of living, and how they fared with their prince. By the time we see the tribes in the Shan states of Burma, they move as they please from one Saobwa to the next, but there the scene may have been more peaceful or the Saobwas less threatening than the great generals and princes. The names given these tribes were little more than convenient terms of reference. Su-li Man are described as two clans: Su and Li. The Meng

Man are named after their leader, known familiarly as Meng Ch'ung. Others like the Hei-ch'ih or Black Teeth are descriptive of appearance; some are named by locality, and still others like the T'ao-hua or Peach-Flower people have lost all but a poetic and possibly sympathetic quality.¹⁰

It is easy to be lured into thinking that this wealth of verbiage is ethnographically useful. The names tell more about the attitudes of the users than the people to whom they refer. Cushman found more than five hundred names referring to the Yao, some used by the Yao themselves.¹¹ Similarly, ethnography is deeply indebted to Wolfram Eberhard for searching the historic documents of China for the names of 144 tribes living in the west, mainly Sze-chuan, Tibet and Yunnan.¹² He and other ethnologists had hoped to trace present-day people back to their origins by ethnic names, but that now seems at best problematic.

If our vista from the *Man Shu* is correct, little could survive of a group entangled in the princely wars. Most favorably poised for survival were tribes whose own chiefs became hereditary princes, but even there the building of fortified cities and the added importance of military values raised serious problems. When it eventually was necessary to man a larger army with foreign recruits, old traditions came under diluting pressures. When the inevitable day of defeat arrived, the old group, even if not parceled out in many directions, came to serve another prince and was renamed by the Chinese for their own convenience. Those tribal people who learned the new prince's ways gained an advantage and could change their affiliation. Yet many of these more intimate cultural contacts did not simply replace one set of traits with another like Mendelian dominants and recessives. In addition there were borrowings, blendings, and elaborations that baffle the unscrambler.

Tribal Experiences in Recent Times

To locate the cultural ancestors of our north Thailand tribes in the *Man Shu* or other treatises on the barbarians seems hopeless. Furthermore, as we have seen, the tribes themselves lack dependable accounts of their past. Let us then try another tack to reach the probable general circumstances that they underwent. Knowing these, we may see how they relate to the peculiarities that we have seen in Thailand. We shall utilize historic sources, travellers' accounts and whatever other information may be available to locate where the tribes lived in the past. These same and other sources help to describe conditions in the various areas. Then we shall ask two questions of each tribal group: (1) Is it likely that the tribal ancestors were defeated by the Chinese or other groups? (2) Can these experiences, peaceful as well as belligerent, offer clues to the tribal peculiarities that we have observed? In effect we are proceeding like psychologists, piecing together collective experience to account for present general behavior.

The Defeated

In many ways the ferment in southern China changed little during the millennium since the *Man Shu*. Of course, imperial rule extended ever deeper into the south and southwest. Emperors first appointed barbarians to govern barbarians, but such an appointment did not guarantee either loyalty or the flow of tribute. Where uprisings occurred, garrisoned forts soon followed and sooner or later the appointment of Chinese military governors and magistrates. However, control of the outlying regions still wavered as the nineteenth-century T'ai Ping and Muslim rebellions testify. At the moment when the country seemed orderly, Chinese settlers flooded in with the parallels of our own continental Wild West, the land-grabbers, bandits, and rebels renewing disturbances with the pre-existing population. Chinese scholars have related the peaks of uprisings to the advent of settlers in Szechuan and Hunan during T'ang and Sung times, and settlers in Kwangtung and Kwanghsi in Ming times.¹³ The process still continues today as party cadres seek to win the Black Lolo, Chingpaw, and Wa into the People's Republic.¹⁴

The Yao of our hill tract in Thailand, calling themselves Iu Mien, declare that they came from Kwangtung province in China. Though they lack records and cannot estimate the number of generations or years since their departure, Chinese influences are readily apparent. Most men and many women speak the Yunnan version of Mandarin. At the Chinese New Year great red sheets of paper embellished with Chinese characters welcome the ancestors of their clans. Purnell with his extensive knowledge of the Yao confirmed in a letter that he had discovered a version of old Cantonese used in the vocal texts of certain religious rites, though other texts were in a language that he called old Yao. Indeed, to make the connection slightly more secure, there are still people in Kwangtung who call themselves Iu Mien. They live in remote villages where they honor their dog ancestor Pan Hu and where they speak to each other in Yao, but on the road they dress and speak like Chinese.¹⁵

During both Yuan and Ming periods major revolts occurred in Kwangtung that required as many as three hundred thousand soldiers to suppress.¹⁶ In Kwanghsi during the 1832s an uprising took place in which the Yao of neighboring Hunan and Kwangtung participated. In the end seven to eight thousand Yao died in the town where they made their last stand.¹⁷ As if bloodshed and burning of Yao houses were a commonplace, the Yao of the village of Yau Ling fled in 1912 from an attack by armed Chinese, who were evening the odds after a fellow Chinese had been robbed and murdered.¹⁸ It seems likely that few Yao could have escaped battles and eventual defeat despite their scattered locations.

When the Yao known to us in Thailand moved from Kwangtung and where they fled is unknown. About 1890 the British reported that Yao had crossed the Mekong into the Shan states,¹⁹ and into Thailand's Chiangrai province at about the same time, according to our own information. The next group to enter Thailand came to our region at the end of World War II from Laos' Haut Mekong province and formed six villages.

Perhaps someone will eventually be able to measure, as with radioactive substances, the half-life of a strong emotion from the moment of inception until its intensity has half-exhausted itself and then note the declining sensitivity that lingers on for years. Almost a century and a quarter ago the people of the Confederate states suffered defeat during the American Civil War; the memory of this defeat with its humiliation lurks in the hearts of southerners. With a better understanding of this process, we might ascertain the gains and losses in transmission from one generation to the next. Even more important for our immediate concern would be to know the requisite levels of intensity for appreciable transformations of hate to admiration and for distilling wisdom from the traumatic event, as did the Jews after the fall of Jerusalem.

Our Yao informants remembered that during their stay in Laos rich Yao families always hired Chinese to tutor their sons in the written language. Mr. Warry visited a number of Yao villages in Burma and Laos, reporting: "The object which occupies the place of honour in the houses of nearly all Yao is the smoky, grimy Chinese volume attached by a string to the wall near the fireplace, and somewhere, if possible, where the light of day can fall upon it."²⁰ He then enlarged on the hiring of Chinese teachers and on old people practicing calligraphy. Two generations later in Thailand instruction in Chinese was dying away because parents deemed Thai the more important language. Few of these Yao villages now lack several Chinese residents, and Yao individually maintain contact with trusted Chinese physicians and mechanics in preference to their Thai equivalents. Yet from time to time word reached us of intra-village quarrels between Yao and Chinese where the Yao seemed unable to respond. Among themselves they resented overtones of superiority, sometimes speaking about moving elsewhere and selling their houses to Chinese.

Vis-à-vis authority, Thai as well as Chinese, Yao tended never to confront but assumed a diplomatic stance. They sought to grasp an opponent's outlook and work out compromises. This proclivity too may be a sign of having absorbed significant portions of Chinese culture that stresses harmonizing relations between people. Certainly they could no longer be soldiers for their own cause. They had been defeated, and for their inadequacies they substituted Chinese practices.

Sources available to us tell little about the history of the Lahu, another defeated tribe. They had been living east of the Salween in Yunnan, somewhat north of 24°N latitude, in scattered villages. Because Chinese authorities suspected the Lahu of allying themselves with the recently arrived British, they sent troops in 1887 to quell a rebellion. Despite heroic resistance for a year or two, the Chinese militia won the day, dispersing the Lahu. The same Mr. Warry who visited the Yao also paid his respects to the Lahu farther south at Meng Kha in Yunnan during the 1890s, where he met a former priestlike ruler whom he called, in Chinese, Ta Fu Ye, a survivor of the former Lahu state. He informed Mr. Warry that "In the Nan Cha Tong Chu Kingdom of the La'hus there were thirty-six of these Fu and over them were set Ta Fu Ye or Great

Buddhas or Lamas, whose number is variously stated."²¹ This suggests a considerable organization with Tibetan inspiration, where regions were headed by lamaseries. After the defeat the Lahu had dispersed, some moving farther south in Yunnan, others into Kengtung. The state was never rebuilt.

Some of these people moved to the Mong Hsat area adjacent to Fang in Thailand and slightly west of our hill tract, where a Lahu settlement had been established for several generations.²² There a second defeat followed in 1934, which Telford describes:

Maheh G'uisha was a Lahu leader who was claiming for himself divine attributes as his name would suggest, "G'uisha" being the Lahu name for their Supreme Being. As a religious teacher of animism he claimed for himself miraculous healing powers, so that Lahus and other races from far and near made pilgrimages to his village to be cured of leprosy, opium smoking and other afflictions. While he was still a humble prophet I visited him. . . . So long as he confined his teaching to religion, Government did not in any way interfere with Maheh; but when he became a menace to the community and was planning the capture of the entire Mung Hsat District it became necessary for government to intervene. He had fortified his village with a very strongly constructed fort. . . . By charms and with the aid of the "Ne" [spirits] in which they trusted, their bodies, they believed, were invulnerable to bullets. When the Lahu fort was eventually stormed, it was found that three brave Lahus had held up for an hour the attacking force of fifty sepoys. . . . The courageous action of the three men permitted their leader Maheh and all others within the fort to escape in the adjacent jungle.²³

After such a defeat, one expects efforts of this sort to die away. However, in 1964 headmen of Lahu villages in our hill tract told of a remarkable old man, too crippled to walk, with bright eyes and superhuman power. He was living in the Mong Hsat area and was called "*pu cong long*" or "great caretaker," a Shan rather than a Lahu title. In many ways he resembled the earlier priestlike rulers and may have gained his title in a vision.²⁴ His age and location suggest he may have led the uprising of 1937, yet, as Young in conversation said, these powers are hereditary, he may have been a kinsman of another priestlike ruler. In either case many households and a few whole villages in our hill tract moved to join him, most returning a year or two later saying they could not provide for themselves in Mong Hsat. Some added that the son of the *pu cong long* was gathering arms to fight the Burmans. By the 1970s the battle had begun. While Burmans held the villages in the valleys Lahu guerrillas held the hills. A little later we encountered new villages of Lahu from

Mong Hsat who had left for fear of Burmese soldiers. Our last reports in 1974 brought bad news: the son of the *pu cong long* had been killed in battle.

These and other self-revealed priestlike rulers, called "man-gods" by Young, stem from the cultural attitudes of Lahu toward themselves.²⁵ When they address their major deities, they term themselves "weak children of the earth."²⁶ Lahus depend on the god G'uisha for the safety of their crops, the multiplication of livestock, and the children born to the household. Without divine support, good fortune will not come. When the familiar village priest (*pawhku*) has a new vision that is validated by increasing his powers and is capped by prophecy of Lahu triumphs, the porch of his house becomes crowded with followers.

A decline in the standard of living among many Lahu villages during the present century sometimes seems clear. Young observed fewer large villages than in earlier times.²⁷ Instead of building sizable Fu temples, the smaller and more mobile villages build spirit houses of modest size. In our hill tract Lahu villages averaged thirteen houses, an average smaller than any other tribal group of the region. These smaller villages rarely contained any of the older specialists: the priest (*pawhku*), the seer (*maupa*), the herbal doctor (*shepa*), the blacksmith, the musician, and so on. One or two men took care of these functions as well as they could. These small villages may be taken as signs of a diminished standard of living. Generally speaking, these little villages fit countryside with low levels of fertility and forest areas with little game. When a village acquires a reputation for abundance, it is bound to swell with newcomers.

At a time of declining wealth and fortune among a population that represented itself as weak and ill-fated, Lahu morale plunged even lower. Some of those in search of alternatives became Christians. The Lahushi then divided to make a special variety of Lahu, the Lahushi Balang, all of whom had been converted. During British times in Burma, these and other tribal people advanced as Christians in American Baptist missionary schools to become soldiers, officials, and teachers. In China many cultivated connections to wealthy and influential Chinese; a few of them reached our hill tract and entered trading circles. A number of optimists, unwilling to abandon their own ethnic heritage, joined the prophets of a better day for the Lahu. Many, however, fled to remote areas to save themselves as best they could. Acute pains of defeat dislodged their grasp on their hillside domain and sent bewildered innocents stampeding in all directions.

The Undefeated

Neither Lisu nor Akha seem to have suffered direct attack or defeat within the past several centuries. The Lisu appear to have lived along the Salween River above latitude 26°N for at least the past four hundred years. Documentary sources in Yunnan state that in 1592 Lisu raided salt warehouses in an area east of the Salween near the latitude of Tali.²⁸ Even in 1910 Lisu were still holding up travellers and robbing

villages.²⁹ Through the years they had spread over much of northern Yunnan and westward into the northern Shan states, even drifting as far south as Kengtung.³⁰

Not until the first decade of this century did anyone report on life among the crags and cliffs of the Lisu heartland.³¹ This Salween region formed the redoubt from which they raided for centuries and to which survivors retreated without fear of pursuit. This inhospitable terrain that provided security failed, however, to provide adequate food for the population. As a result colonies seem to have been fanning out in both easterly and westerly directions, even as far south as Kengtung by 1910. Wherever the colony chose to settle, it fell under the direction of a Shan Saobwa or a Chinese magistrate and eagerly adopted local agriculture and husbandry. By the time the Lisu reached Thailand, perhaps in the 1920s, they were rated high among producers of opium.

To meet the broadening world they have thus liberally borrowed what seemed advantageous. From the Chinese they adopted lineage names like Yang, Chang, and Ch'ao; the altar shelf with its offerings to the ancestors; and the cut of a jacket with its broad overlap to the shoulder. Unlike the Yao they bypassed Chinese writing and ritual, seeming to select but not embrace the culture of their richer neighbors. In times of plenty they gloried in stylish clothing that in Thailand shows little continuity with the past. They are individualists with no more awareness or interest in their common heritage than hospital patients treated for a common disease. Each household of a Lisu village makes its own decisions, and should anyone interfere, they may choose to reply with a gun as well as move to a quieter colony. We may characterize them as independent entrepreneurs who are prepared to accept failure in their stride.

This Lisu bravado contrasts with Akha withdrawal. All nineteenth-century travellers were sure to describe the costumes of Akha women wearing kilts and hats studded with silver and draped with furs, but then as surely they passed on. The indefatigable Mr. Warry enquired about their history but received no answer that seemed to him reasonable.³² Their past is almost a blank. By migrating southward in Yunnan through the early nineteenth century, Akha kept a step or two in advance of imperial Chinese armies. In the Shan states they seem to have lived without confrontation, at least since the 1850s when they helped repel the Siamese attacks on Kengtung.³³ These and other acts of heroism have not saved them being demeaned by other tribes, Chinese, and Shan. Outsiders remark with disgust at Akha eating dogs, at Akha women dressing immodestly, and at various other features that allege Akha stupidity. Against disparagement Akha defend themselves with strong village gates and walls against spirit attack made of strong words uttered by village priests (*dzoema*). Within these fortifications a strong spirit of cooperation and sharing welds the people into largely harmonious groups with restricted but rewarding lives.

The losses of a city and their literacy together with their fated humble life that would never again soar could be accepted by rigorous preservation of what remained of their culture within a village. Their great genealogy that links each individual to their culture hero and beyond, and to each other, have served as reminders of their former competence and helped sustain them through humiliation.

In this section we have found historical validation for the tale of defeat among the Yao and the Lahu. Their experience has turned the Yao into diplomats who abjure confrontation to find the best bargain that circumstances permit. The Lahu who have not abandoned a disintegrating tradition have grasped at straws in their frustration. While we have found no evidence for historic defeats among Lisu or Akha, the former have proudly used it to confirm their advances from desperate poverty among the inaccessible mountains of China. The Akha have accepted the tale as their own, fighting to preserve what still remains to be conserved.

Group behavior is related to collective experience but no more closely than with individual behavior to individual experience. The connection between Lisu pride and their mounting successes is predictably related on the basis of common sense, yet on the same ground the retiring Akha should have lost rather than avoided a war. Of course, as with individuals, the influence of an immediate scene, for instance an automobile accident, may obliterate the past, putting us with different backgrounds on a common footing to meet the crisis. Other situations, like funerals, exert the contrary influences, where those with a common past share in the mourning. The retiring Akha seem to be responding not to the past but to the persistently demeaning present.

The four general tensions of the tribal groups (isolation, rejection of authority, acceptance of low status, and low self-esteem) now appear as a constellation of related traits. They are congruent with the past of any group that has experienced short periods of glory and then precipitous change to long periods of misery. Their present setting in our hill tract, where population is increasing at the expenses of forest and soil, bode no better for them. Moreover, variations within this syndrome of isolation and low self-esteem arise from its interplay with successes that could be very minor in the contest. Through such variations the tribes become momentarily differentiated. Bad news calls the Yao to solemn council, the Lisu to going about their business as usual, the Lahu to panic, and the Akha to discounting the news.

The View From Doi Tung

Doi Tung is a sacred mountain on the Burma-Thai border at the edge of our hill region. Every March pilgrims climb to the Buddhist temple near the top and save a flower to offer on the chedi standing near the peak. On the north side of the peak beyond the nearby limestone crags a sea of green hills extends to the horizon. This is Kengtung state. East, beyond the immediate valley and beyond that streak of water, the

Mekong River, lie the hills of Laos. Somewhere among the hills, to the northeast, if we can make it out, is the valley of the Mekong winding its way past Mong Lim toward Chianghung, now in China and called Ch'e-li. Someday we may reach there in person, but now the trips into China are vicarious ventures.

Like any barbarian I enter the company of students of China with humility, not knowing the language and etiquette yet hoping to learn the correct ways. It was almost inevitable that I should mistake the *Mon Shu* for a treatise on tribal groups of the ninth century A.D. Though not all inclusive, its catalogue told something about the characteristics of many peoples. Eberhard's more thorough listings from a greater variety of sources offered a convenient backup.

Some weeks later I began to understand that Fan Ch'o, the author of this memorial to the emperor, the *Mon Shu*, was, with the same brush strokes, writing a handbook to help other officials cope with the plethora of groups which any new governor would meet, saying a little about each to make identification easier. Fan Ch'o was writing the equivalent of a bird or flower guide: a guide to the barbarians, imposing his own lucid classifications on these people. He chose the most accessible characteristic he could find to mark his categories: the location, the ruling prince, their appearance, and so on. What they called themselves, who were their friends and enemies, apart from formal alliances, was unimportant. Then I discovered that the Lisu accepted the same name that the Chinese used for them. The same happened to the Yao, except that they varied the sound. The people labeled "yao min" by the Chinese accepted this name but pronounced it "iu mien." "Yao min" means "vassal people" in English. Whoever roughly corresponded to the description accompanying these and other labels received the appropriate name.

This tidy practice, however, led to certain untidiness. Though the people living near each other in Kwanghsi looked alike and were called Yao, they came from different backgrounds. One group of them had come from Hunan where they were also called Yao. Good enough. The other group, however, came from Fuchien where they were called She.³⁴ The system also could not cope with a group of people on Hainan Island who were neither clearly Miao nor Yao by official definition, and to make matters worse, locally were called Li. A new category of Miao Li had to be invented. Of course, imperial affairs had to continue, so that all people in a given classification, whether or not they plotted against the emperor, received identical punishment. This experience may weld together a new tribe.

In viewing the multiple tribes of southern China and Southeast Asia, it becomes clear that other people were also busy classifying people because their customs differed. Only if one can speak like a Burman, or a Thai, or a Vietnamese, dress and follow the respective proper etiquette, does one belong to that group. Otherwise one is a foreigner, as Roux describes: "Their complete name is Kha-P'ai-P'u-Noi. They belong actually to the Kha-P'ai race, which is well extended through

the water shed of the Nam Ou. They are nicely differentiated from the other Kha-P'ai by costume and slightly by language. The name of P'u-Noi was apparently given by the Laotians. The people adopted it. . . ."35 We have already seen the Lahushi changing their name when they became Christians.

Few tribes survive long. To have numbers helps, for it is harder to exterminate all the widely scattered people of the same category. The Miao with their 2.5 million and perhaps a 2,000-year-old history are clearly the winners. With small groups, where the few survivors can be absorbed quietly in neighboring villages, genocide is easier. The Chingpaw, Wa, and Lisu survive in part because of isolation and tough defenses. Isolation by itself is also good, as the early settlers of our hill tract discovered, but without a common defense their vulnerability grows. Those who chose to live more richly under some prince's protection had to accept the increased precariousness of their perches.

It does not take a new tribe long to announce its presence with new costumes, a few new words in the language, and special flavoring for the old ritual. The new culture is a thin layer of cultural distinctiveness that penetrates only the outer layers. It does not saturate the whole person with its dye. Culture can be changed rather painlessly; survival is more important. Few are the people who have not experienced defeat, have never seen a ruined village or town, and never abandoned old customs. The Lahu lament, with which we began this tale addresses widely felt yearnings.

NOTES

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22. Ibid., p. 581.
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25. Ibid., p. 131.
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